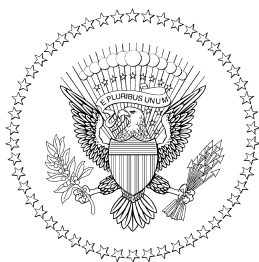


Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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Pages 1501–1586

Contents

Addresses and Remarks

See also Appointments and Nominations;

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Arizona, remarks in Phoenix—1561

California

Remarks with Nancy Reagan in Bel Air—
1575

Victory 2004 dinner in Santa Monica—1575

Florida

Niceville, discussion at Okaloosa-Walton
College—1527

Panama City, remarks—1541

Pensacola, remarks—1520

Nevada, United Brotherhood of Carpenters

and Joiners of America in Las Vegas—1567

New Mexico, discussion at Eclipse Aviation in
Albuquerque—1546

Oregon, Columbia River channel deepening
project in Portland—1582

Radio address—1501

Virginia, discussion at Northern Virginia

Community College in Annandale—1502

Appointments and Nominations

Central Intelligence Agency, Director,
remarks—1519

Bill Signings

Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act
of 2004, statement—1518

Executive Orders

Establishing an Emergency Board To
Investigate a Dispute Between the
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation
Authority and Its Conductors Represented
by the United Transportation Union—1518

Interviews With the News Media

Exchange with reporters in the Oval Office—
1516

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Poland, Prime Minister Belka—1516

Supplementary Materials

Acts approved by the President—1586

Checklist of White House press releases—
1585

Digest of other White House
announcements—1584

Nominations submitted to the Senate—1585

Editor's Note: The President was in Medina, WA, on August 13, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, August 13, 2004

The President's Radio Address

August 7, 2004

Good morning. My most solemn duty as President is to protect our country, and in the 3 years since our country was attacked, we have taken important steps to overcome terrorist threats to this Nation.

We have pursued terrorists across the world, destroying their leadership and denying them sanctuaries. We are working with other governments to break up terror cells and stop planned attacks, on virtually every continent. We've created a new Department of Homeland Security to win the battle against terror on the home front. We are working to secure our borders, air and sea ports, and critical infrastructure. We are bringing the best technologies to bear against the threat of chemical and biological warfare.

We're using the tools of the PATRIOT Act to track terrorists within our borders and stop them before they kill our people. We have transformed the FBI to focus on the prevention of terrorist attacks. We've established a Terrorist Threat Integration Center to merge and analyze foreign and domestic intelligence on global terror in a single place. And we are sharing that intelligence in unprecedented ways with local officials and first-responders who need it to protect our communities.

I agree with the conclusion of the 9/11 Commission. Because of these steps at home and abroad, our country is safer than it was on September the 11th, 2001. Yet, we're still not safe. The elevation of the threat level in New York, New Jersey, and Washington, DC, is a grim reminder of the dangers we continue to face. Information from arrests in Pakistan, taken together with information gathered by the U.S. intelligence community, indicated that Al Qaida has cased financial targets in New York, New Jersey, and Washington, DC, and has recently updated their targeting information. This information was

buttressed by other information we already had.

We and our allies are working to protect our people from these threats. As we fight the ongoing terrorist threat, we will continue moving forward with additional changes to protect our country.

This week I asked Congress to create the position of a National Intelligence Director. The person in that office will be appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate, and will serve at the pleasure of the President. The Director will serve as the President's principal intelligence advisor and will oversee and coordinate the foreign and domestic intelligence community. The CIA will be managed by a separate Director. The National Intelligence Director will assume the broader responsibility of leading the intelligence community across our Government, and he or she will have the resources and authority to meet that responsibility.

This week I also announced that we establish a new National Counterterrorism Center. This new center will build on the excellent work of the Terrorist Threat Integration Center and will become our Government's knowledge bank for information about known and suspected terrorists. This center will also be responsible for preparing the daily terrorism threat report for the President and senior officials, and its Director will report to the National Intelligence Director, once that position is created.

We will act on other valuable recommendations made by the 9/11 Commission. In the coming days, I will issue a series of directives to various departments on essential steps for the Government on the war on terror. As we take these steps, our Nation is grateful to the dedicated, hard-working men and women of our intelligence community who are working day and night to keep our country safe.

We're a nation in danger. We're doing everything we can in our power to confront the danger. We're making good progress in protecting our people and bringing our enemies to account. But one thing is certain: We'll keep our focus; we'll keep our resolve; and we will do our duty to best secure our country.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:51 a.m. on August 6 in Kennebunkport, ME, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 6 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks in a Discussion at Northern Virginia Community College in Annandale, Virginia

August 9, 2004

The President. Thank you for being here.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all. Okay. Thank you all for coming. Please be seated.

Thanks for coming. I appreciate the warm welcome. I want to thank you all for giving me a chance to come and explain why I want to be your President for 4 more years.

We've done a lot since I got elected. We, the country, have worked together. It is—and we've accomplished a lot, and we've been through a lot. It's been tough times. The only reason to look backward is to best determine who to lead us forward. So today I'm going to talk about some ideas as to how to make this country a safer, stronger, and better place for every citizen, for every single person who lives in this country.

First, I'm sorry that Laura is not here. She's out campaigning. I tell the people, in front of these enthusiastic and large crowds we've been having, that, you know, probably the wisest reason to put me back in there is so that she'll be the First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm running with a good man. I admit it, that Dick Cheney is not the prettiest face on the ticket. [Laughter] But that's not why I picked him. I picked him because of his sound judgment, his experience, his ability to do the job.

I want to thank Dr. Bob Templin for allowing us to use this important facility. I say "important;" it's because the community college system is an integral part of making sure that this country is a hopeful country. I'll tell you why. Part of the reasons I'm seeking the Presidency again is because I understand that if we use our community college system wisely, people will be trained for the jobs which will exist. See, in order to keep jobs here in America, we've got to have a workforce that is capable of filling the jobs of the 21st century. And one of the crucial links in making sure people have the skills necessary to fill the jobs that are coming is the community college system. And Bob understands that. I appreciate you being here, Doc. Thanks for giving us a chance to come by.

I want to thank my friend Senator George Allen for being here. I appreciate you coming. I want to thank Frank Wolf and Ed Schrock. I appreciate Frank's concern and dedication for those who need American help. He understands what I know, that we have a responsibility in the world to help those who hunger and those who are afflicted by disease and those who suffer under tyranny. And I appreciate Frank's deep concern not only about the citizens of this State and our country but also the deep concern about those to whom we can deliver help. And we are. Just remember, when people talk about America, just remember they're talking about a country which is leading the fight against HIV/AIDS, not only here at home but on the continent of Africa.

And I appreciate Ed coming over. Thanks for being here, Ed. I appreciate your leadership as well. The attorney general is with us today. General, I'm proud you're here. Thanks for coming.

We've got some of our citizens up here because we're going to talk about a crucial aspect of our vision, which is how to encourage an ownership society to flourish in America. I'm going to get to that in a minute.

Before I do, I want to talk about a couple of other points. One is that we're making progress in spreading the peace. See, we know that a free society is going to be a peaceful society. We also know that freedom is not our country's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each person in this world. And that's why—that's why over the next 4 years, we'll continue to work to spread freedom, for our own security and for the sake of others.

We've done some hard work over the past 3 years. We must never forget the lessons of September the 11th. First of all, the enemy that we face is cruel. Unlike Americans, they don't have a conscience. They're willing to kill innocent people in order to shake our will and our resolve. As we work to secure our country, we must never forget the nature of the people. And those people cannot be negotiated with. You can't reason with them. You can't sit down and say, "Look, why won't you change your ways?" That's not the way they think. And your President must clearly understand that. That's why it's important for us—that's why over the next 4 years, we will engage them in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere so we do not have to face them here at home.

Secondly, when this country speaks, it better mean what it says, in order to make the world a more peaceful place. In other words, when we say things, we must mean what we say. And when I said that if you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorist, I meant exactly that. And that's why we made the decision—a tough decision, by the way; nobody wants to commit kids to war. That's what you got to understand. It's the hardest decision a President can make, and you only do so if you're convinced it's going to lead to peace.

It's a different kind of war we're in, and therefore, we had to say clearly to those that were providing safe haven that you're going to be held accountable as well. Because, remember, Al Qaida was training in Afghanistan. They had taken over the country. We could not allow that to continue for our own security and for the sake of the people who lived underneath the brutal dictatorship of the Taliban. And so thanks to our United States military and our friends and allies, Af-

ghanistan is now free. Afghanistan is an ally. Afghanistan is an ally on the war on terror.

I'll tell you something really interesting—two things I want to share with you about Afghanistan. I can remember earlier in the spring, I think it was, people were talking about how maybe people aren't going to vote. Don't you remember, there was some serious terrorist attacks on women, in particular, that had got their registration cards and were in the process. The world was kind of predicting people weren't going to show up to vote. Turns out, over 8 million—I think the number is 8 million—Afghan citizens have registered to vote, far exceeding expectations. People want to be free. People want to be free. They want to live in a free society. They want to be able to exercise their rights as a human being. It's a universal desire and a universal love.

Secondly, when I was in Cleveland a while back—this is like the last couple of weeks—I've been traveling a lot, so it's kind of hard for me to remember exactly where I've been. *[Laughter]* I went to the International Children's Game. I helped kick it off. And I was there speaking to the athletes, and right to my right—I'll never forget it—was the Afghan girls soccer team. Now, let me tell you what's interesting about that. They would not have been in the United States—they wouldn't even have been playing soccer under the Taliban. These people were so brutal, so dark in their vision that many young girls didn't have a chance to be educated.

Not only do we have an ally in the war on terror, there is a more compassionate and decent society growing in Afghanistan, which is in our interests, and it's in the world's interests.

As the American people look at this election, they must take a look at the candidates and determine who best understands the lessons to be learned from September the 11th. Another lesson is, is that we must deal with threats before they fully materialize. In this world of threats to our homeland, in this world where there are folks who cannot stand our country and our way of life, we must deal with threats. It used to be we didn't have to. Now you just can't hope they go away.

They must be dealt with—hopefully, diplomatically; hopefully, we can cure things, problems peacefully. That ought to be the first priority of any President. However, if diplomacy fails, we must be a country that is willing to take action to defend ourselves.

I want you to remember, Saddam Hussein was a threat; he was a clear threat. He had used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. He had terrorist organizations in his country. He was a sworn enemy of the United States of America. He is a person that invaded countries in his neighborhood. We all looked at the intelligence. I looked at it. Members of Congress from both political parties looked at it. My opponent looked at it. We all came to the same conclusion: Saddam Hussein was a threat. The United Nations Security Council—the U.N. Security Council concluded Saddam was a threat and passed a resolution unanimously which said, “Disarm, disclose, or face serious consequences.” That’s what the free world said.

And he deceived the world again. I say “again” because that’s what he’d been doing for a decade. And then he deceived the inspectors. Remember, with that period of time, we said, “Oh, let the inspections work.” We were all for that. We wanted the inspectors to work. But it was clear that he was deceiving them. So I had a choice to make, and that is, whether or not to trust a man who had used weapons of mass destruction, somebody who had used—somebody who had defied the free world. My choice was, do I forget the lessons of September the 11th, or do I take actions necessary to defend our country. And given that very difficult choice, I chose to defend America. I will do so every time. *[Applause]* Thank you all.

We didn’t find the stockpiles that we thought we would find. Everybody thought they would be there. We haven’t found them yet. But he did have the capability of making weapons. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. We couldn’t afford to take the chance that a sworn enemy of America would share capabilities with an enemy which hates us. That’s a chance we couldn’t afford to take.

I’ll tell you an interesting story—and by the way, I think the candidates for President

must say yes or no, whether or not they would have made the same decision.

I tell the story about the seven men that came to see me in the Oval Office. They had had their right hands cut off by Saddam Hussein because his currency had devalued and he was looking for a scapegoat. And they had a X burned in their forehead as well, to brand them as enemies of the state, I guess; I don’t know what the symbol was. But they came to see me in the Oval Office. Needless to say, it was a powerful moment. The fellows walked in and were just overwhelmed by the majesty of a shrine to democracy, and it was—imagine, seeing the President of the United States. And I was emotional because the contrast between what we believe and what Saddam Hussein did to his people is just so amazing, because these people had just come from Houston, Texas, where they had received new hands because of the generosity of an American citizen named Marvin Zindler. It was just a clear contrast between the brutality of a man who whimsically could have somebody’s hand cut off and the great generosity and love of compassion of the American citizens who are willing to help heal somebody, no matter their religion or where they’re from.

A free Iraq is going to change the world. For those of you with young kids, I want you to think about a world that is going to be much more peaceful, a country more secure because, during these difficult days, we’re standing true to our firm belief and our ideals that freedom equals peace. And it’s hard work. It’s hard work. It’s hard work because there are people in that—in the Middle East that can’t stand the thought of a free society. It just scares them. And they don’t scare us. They’re tough, but we’re resolute because we understand the charge of history, the charge that history has given us. We have a duty. We have a duty to keep our word. We have told the Iraqi people and the people of Afghanistan that we’re with you. And they’re watching carefully. They’re watching carefully to determine whether or not they can take a risk for freedom, or whether or not America’s word doesn’t mean anything.

I’m convinced that these are historic times. These are times when people will look back and say, thank goodness the American people

stood true to our belief that liberty is a transforming moment in the history of the world.

A couple of other points. I talk about a stronger and better America; it means our economy needs to be strong. The economy is growing, and there's more to do. One of the things we better make sure is we don't raise the taxes on the people. This is going to be a campaign issue. I'm going to talk about good education policy to help train workers. I'll talk about energy policy to make sure we're not—that we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy. Of course, I'm going to talk about liability reform, medical liability reform. I'll talk about tort reform, so our business people can thrive and hire people.

I mean, the economy is strong. It's getting stronger. And there are policies we need to put in place to make sure this is the best place in the world to do business. If you want jobs to stay in America, like I do, this better be a place where people feel comfortable taking risks and expanding the job base. So I've spent a lot of time talking about that in the course of the campaign.

Today we're going to talk about how to encourage an ownership society in America. Listen, these are changing times. If you really think about it, they are much different from the times when we came up. Most of our dads—at least guys my age—dads worked for one company. Mine did move around a little bit, but—[laughter]. Georges generally worked for one company. [Laughter]

At any rate, when we think about it, it was a different society back a couple of decades ago because a person stayed with the same company, had the health plan from the company, retirement plan from the company. Now people are moving around. It's a different world. And there is some uncertainty in that kind of world. You've got moms and dads that are both working, sometimes out of the house. And the economy is changing, and therefore, Government policy ought to change with the times. And one way to bring stability and security into a person's life is to encourage ownership. See, if you own and control your own health care plan, you can move from job to job without worrying as to whether or not you're going to get health coverage for your family. If you own your

own home and building equity in your own home and you're changing from job to job, it provides great security and relief.

And so we're going to talk about different forms of ownership here. But the point here is, I want you to understand that over the next 4 years we'll be working to build a culture of ownership in America. We want more people owning things in this country.

Let me put it to you bluntly. In a changing world, we want more people to have control over your own life. And that's a difference—there's a difference in philosophy, when you think about it. A lot of the Government policies are, you know, as I like to put it: We'll give you the orders, and you pay the bills. [Laughter] If you really think about it, there's a philosophical divide here in this campaign. My judgment is, Government ought to be empowering people by giving them more control over their lives. And we'll talk about some practical ways to do that.

Now, look, one of the things we'll always work to do is to take care of those people who cannot help themselves. As a matter of fact, a proper policy of Government is to give people the tools necessary to be able to realize their own dreams. That's why education is vital. That's why the No Child Left Behind Act must be strengthened. It's making a big difference. I'm telling you, when you start asking the question, "Can you read and write and add and subtract?"—all of a sudden people start learning better. There's accountability. It holds people to account. We've got to end this—it's a mediocre system when you quit on kids basically because of the color of their skin, you know? We're not going to do that anymore in America.

In terms of health care, there's some smart things we can do. We've got to recognize there are people who can't help themselves. That's why these health centers we've opened up around the country make eminent sense—so primary care for low-income people can be delivered at these centers, as opposed to emergency rooms.

There are things we're doing throughout our administration but all aimed at encouraging people to help themselves and eventually being able to own something too. And so what I want to talk to you today about

is some interesting examples of what I'm saying.

We're going to start off with Sharon Rainey. She's sitting right here. She's an entrepreneur. Isn't that a lovely word? You know, entrepreneur—we want entrepreneurs. See, the job of Government is not to create wealth but to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and alive and well. And it is under the Bush administration and will continue to be.

Ready to go? All right. Sharon started her own business. True or false?

Ms. Rainey. True. *[Laughter]*

The President. This is a warm-up. I'm not even a lawyer, and here I am leading the witness. *[Laughter]*

Ms. Rainey. She needs the leading. *[Laughter]*

The President. Tell us what you do.

[Ms. Rainey made brief remarks.]

The President. See, let me stop you there. First of all, what Government cannot do is encourage Sharon to start her own business. *[Laughter]* We can't tell her to. I beg your pardon, we can encourage her to, by good policy; we can't tell her to. See, you can't make her be an entrepreneur. Secondly, she's got to design the product herself. She's got to be smart enough to figure out how to meet demand, which she did. But one thing we can do is not overtax her.

Most new jobs in America are created by small businesses. That's really important for people to understand. I hope you know that. The tax relief we passed—the well-timed tax relief we passed, I might add—recognized the importance of small businesses in our society. See, most people probably do not understand that, by far, the vast majority of small businesses are organized like Sharon's business is organized and pay individual income taxes. They're called Subchapter S's or, in this case, an LLC or a sole proprietorship. And therefore, when she files her business tax returns, she pays individual income taxes. And therefore, when you hear us talking about providing tax relief to individuals, it ought to be providing tax relief to individuals and to the small-business sector of America. See, we want taxes low for Sharon so her business, which has now gone from not-for-

profit to for-profit—that's always a good sign, by the way, if you're a businessperson. *[Laughter]* Isn't that right?

Ms. Rainey. Yes, sir.

The President. You can say "for-profit." We want her business to flourish. She hired a person recently, I understand—or not?

Ms. Rainey. I've hired three people recently. I've now gone up to six part-time employees.

The President. Let me talk to you about—see, she hired three. And when the entrepreneurial spirit is strong in the country, the Sharons of America hire three people here, three people there, and all of a sudden it starts to amount to something. And it's—that's why the people are finding work, because the small-business sector of the country is strong.

I asked Sharon to come because I think it's such a wonderful example of somebody who created her own business because of her own ingenuity and her own drive. And now the role of Government is not to—is to make sure that the environment is such that she can continue to grow. She's got to figure out the right product, don't get me wrong. There are no guarantees in the business world. But I can tell you one guarantee: If we run the prices up on—run the taxes up on Sharon, it's going to be hard for her to expand.

That's why you've got to be careful about this rhetoric, "We're only going to tax the rich." You know who the—the rich in America happen to be the small-business owners. That's what that means. Just remember, when you're talking about, oh, "We're just going to run up the taxes on a certain number of people." First of all, real rich people figure out how to dodge taxes. *[Laughter]* And the small-business owners end up paying a lot of the burden of this taxation. Third, I want to make another point. We shouldn't be taking more than 35 percent of anybody's money anyway, Federal taxes ought to be—*[applause]*.

Sharon is a small-business owner. We want more people owning their own small business. There's some incredibly helpful—hopeful signs in this country. The number of minority small-business owners are increasing—is increasing. It's—the number is going up, and that's really important and hopeful.

The number of women-owned businesses is increasing, and that is, I think, really positive news for the country. We want people to say, "This is my business; I own my business," just like we want people saying, "I own my own home."

And so, therefore, policies over the next 4 years will be to encourage others to own their own home, to expand the homeownership in America. Right now the homeownership rate is the highest ever. We want more people owning their own home.

And so we've got Kevin with us, Kevin Brault, first-time homeowner. He's a fellow that walks out for the first time and says, "Welcome to my home." So what's it like to say, "Welcome to my home"?

Mr. Brault. It feels great. So I purchased my home, first home, in November of 2001. And at that time, it was close to 2 months after September 11th. So I was a little hesitant as to, you know, whether the economy was going to stay strong, what was going to happen in this area, because my home is just a couple miles away. So I went forward and decided to take that step, to create my own ownership and create my own net worth. And it's been a great decision. Since then, the net worth of the home has increased over 50 percent. Then with interest rates coming down last summer, I was able to refinance from 6.5 percent to 5 percent, thus saving over \$300 a month on my mortgage.

The President. That's good, yes. You know, when a homeowner starts talking about his own home—in this case, he starts talking about, "My value has gone up"—[laughter]—that means his worth. That means that in a changing time, it is helpful to know that your portfolio, your asset base, that which you own, has got a little more value to it. It kind of changes your attitude, doesn't it, a little bit. You know something, it changes it so much, he's getting married. That's good. Where's Lisa?

Mr. Brault. Right there in the blue shirt.

The President. You've probably got some ideas about how to remodel the home, don't you?

Mr. Brault. Big time, absolutely.

The President. That's a word we use in this administration a lot, "big time." [Laughter] Anyway, this man got relief from taxes,

and I think it says you saved about \$800 in '03, same amount in '04, because when we provided tax relief, we said, "If you pay taxes, you get relief." That's not the way sometimes tax relief works in Washington. Sometimes it's, "We're going to make sure only certain people get tax relief." If you're going to provide relief, it's only fair that everybody ought to get relief. That's why we reduced all rates, which seems to make sense. And old Kevin Brault here got him \$800. I like to put it this way: Once you set priorities at the Federal level, Kevin Brault can spend his own money better than the Government can. Right, Kevin?

Mr. Brault. That's right.

The President. I was hoping that would be your answer. [Laughter] And if the tax relief isn't made permanent, his taxes go up; so do Sharon's. That's why we're having this debate. So does yours; that's right. That's why we're having this debate in Washington, DC. You see, when Congress passed the tax relief, parts of the tax relief plan were set to expire. If Congress doesn't act, the child credit is going to go down, which means you're going to—if you've got a child, you're paying higher taxes. The marriage penalty goes up if Congress doesn't act, which means if you're married, you're going to pay higher taxes. The 10-percent bracket goes away, which means if you're benefiting from the 10-percent bracket, you're paying higher taxes. We don't need to be raising taxes on the American people right now. The taxes ought to be lower, to keep the economy growing. Good job, Kevin.

Let me talk to you about savings for retirement. We've got Susie and Chris Ensign with us today. They're savers. Good policy encourages people to save. And one of the interesting questions that we'll be confronted with in Government when the baby boomers begin to—really begin to retire is how to make sure the Social Security system is strong so that the Ensigns will be able to see something from Social Security. This is a very important issue for young workers. Old guys like me don't need to worry about it because the system is solvent for those who have retired or are near retirement. What we need to worry about is younger folks, like the Ensigns. And so we're going to talk a

little bit about savings. I want them to share with the people who might be listening how they think about savings, what savings means as a young couple. And maybe they've got some suggestions on Social Security, how to strengthen the system, how to make it fulfill the promise—better fulfill the promise that our Government has made.

Welcome. Thank you all for coming. Which one of you going to lead off?

Mr. Ensign. My name is Chris, and this is my wife, Susie.

The President. Right.

[Mr. Ensign made brief remarks.]

The President. See, what you're hearing is—that's a very interesting—see, what Chris just said is part of an attitudinal shift towards Social Security that is taking place in the country. When I was coming up, it was pretty well assumed that Social Security would be all right—until people began to calculate the fact that there's a lot of baby boomers who are going to be on the system relative to the number of payers into the system, like Chris. And the fundamental question is, can we change the system by strengthening it, so that Chris can realize there's something available for him after he pays for me? That's really what we're talking about, isn't it?

And what he just said was, he said, look, if you look at the rates of return on the money in the Social Security trust fund, they are so abysmally low that it is impossible—virtually impossible from a fiscal perspective to make the system work without raising taxes on him and his family to the point where it chokes productivity and progress.

And then what he said was, he said, "Well, would Government please consider putting aside some of my own money"—at his choice—in a personal account, an account that he could manage under obviously strict guidelines but could get a better rate of return for his money than that which we're now getting inside the Social Security trust. And by the way, it would be an account that is his own—or their own, that they could then pass on to whomever they wanted to pass it on to. I support the idea of creating a personal saving account for younger workers in order to make sure the system is solvent.

By the way, tax relief provided this family \$2,000 in '03 and '04. I know it doesn't sound like a lot to people inside the Capital, I guess; that doesn't sound all that much, maybe. It's a lot to these people, and it enabled them to take advantage of the increased contribution levels for the IRAs, right? You went from 2,000 to 3,000 for your IRA. That's helpful. In other words, these good folks decided to take the tax relief and add to their savings accounts, which provide security in a changing world.

And so we need to do two things. We need to help people save with good policy on current plans, perhaps simplify the process. There's now a lot of savings opportunities. There are IRAs—this kind of IRA, that kind of IRA—and good policy will be to simplify it and make the rules clear so as to encourage more savings so people have got their own nest egg to help them in a changing world. And then, of course, we talked about Social Security.

I want to thank you all for coming. Good job. You want to say anything?

Mrs. Ensign. [Inaudible]

The President. Okay, one other thing we're going to talk about today is health care. I told you we're expanding community health centers so that low-income folks can get primary care. That's important. The Government policies, because of helping States with waiver requests, have expanded SCHIP—those are—that's health care for low-income children. That was an important policy.

We changed Medicare for the better. We strengthened Medicare. Remember, Medicare was a system that said, we'll pay for your hospital stay, in case you've got a heart problem, but we won't pay for the medicine necessary to prevent you from going to the hospital in the first place. That doesn't seem to make much sense, did it? And so we've begun to modernize the system, make it better for our seniors, starting with the drug discount card. By the way, if you're a senior, you need to look into the drug discount cards. They'll help you save money.

Next year we're going to have preventative screenings for the first time in Medicare. Seniors signing up for Medicare will be able to have a checkup, which seems to make

sense for the Government. If you're interested in trying to save money through rational policy, you ought to be checking people early, before it's too late. That's what we're going to start doing in Medicare. And then in '06, seniors will have a prescription drug benefit attached to Medicare, and they'll have the choice necessary to make—to design a program to suit their needs. This is good policy. You might remember the issue of Medicare. Year after year after year, politicians talked about it. This administration got it done.

Most people get their insurance through their business. And small businesses are having trouble paying for health care. That's the problem we've got in the country today. A lot of it has to do with frivolous and junk lawsuits that are running up the cost of health care. By the way, you can't be pro-small-business and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You can't be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice. I'm going to work with Congress for liability reform and for tort reform.

Health savings accounts are a new option for Americans to be able to say, "I own my own health savings account," and the doctor-patient relationship is central to the decision-making process. That's the core of our philosophy. I want—we've got Roger Wells. Rog is a vet who has looked into and utilized a health savings account. I've asked him to come to explain how they work. Health savings accounts are new. Anything new in society, when it comes to health, requires a certain amount of education.

Now, if you're a small-business owner like Sharon is, I want you to listen to these accounts, because part of the problem we have in our society is the cost of health care is too high. These accounts will help reduce the cost of health care for small businesses as well as for individuals.

Roger, you have got a health savings account. Tell us about it.

[*Dr. Wells made brief remarks.*]

The President. Let me tell you what he just said, see if I can try it. I appreciate it.

He buys a catastrophic plan that says the insurance company will pay for anything over \$5,000 of health care coverage. So he's got the comfort of knowing that if something goes terribly wrong, he's taken care of by the insurance company. He then contributes, tax-free, into his own account, \$5,000. So in other words, he doesn't have to contribute anything; he can come out of his pocket. But, nevertheless, there's a tax incentive to do so—so that from zero to \$5,000, he takes care of it.

Now, this is a small-business owner. She can, for her employees, buy a catastrophic plan with a lower deductible and help the employee with the money for the incidentals, for the ongoing daily medical expenses.

But anyway, in Roger's case, he puts the \$5,000 in tax-free; his money earns interest tax-free; and if he needs the money to pay medical expenses in the year, up to \$5,000, it comes out tax-free. Now, if he continues to make good choices—he's from New Hampshire—if he continues walking those mountains of New Hampshire so that he's healthy, and he only spends 1,000 of the 5,000, that 4,000 is his. He can put another 5,000 in next year if he chooses. He can use some of the 4,000 to buy the catastrophic plan. Anyway, my point to you is, is that he gets to decide, as opposed to a program where somebody else is making the health care decisions, an insurance bureaucrat, for example, is making the decisions. And so Roger is now in total charge on a tax-free basis.

These plans will change small businesses. And so small-business owners need to take a look at health savings accounts. It's a way to provide good health coverage for employees at a much lower cost basis than you're probably having to provide now. So I want to thank you for sharing that with us. Go ahead.

Dr. Wells. Can I say that there is one big problem with this program?

The President. Sure.

Dr. Wells. It didn't start 10 years ago.

The President. That's right. Are you a big animal or a little animal?

Dr. Wells. I do horses only.

The President. Horses only?

Dr. Wells. Horses only.

The President. I was going to say, Barney has got him a headache and—[laughter]—you know who Barney is, don't you? [Laughter]

I hope you found this discussion interesting. I certainly did. What we're talking about here is we want people—when you hear me talk about ownership society, that's what I'm talking about, how to help people control their own lives. If you really think about what we're talking about, we're talking about policies that say to the American people, "You're in control of your life, not the Government. The Government is not dictating how you do things; you are."

And I want to thank you all for sharing these with us. I've got time to answer a couple of questions, if you might have some. I'm not—it kind of gives me a chance to warm up for press conferences. [Laughter]

I do want to say something about the Faith-Based Initiative that I talk a lot about. I understand the strength of this country is the hearts and souls of our citizens. Over the next 4 years, I will continue to rally what I call the armies of compassion, because I believe that society can change, one heart and one soul and one conscience at a time, when people who have got love in their hearts put their arm around somebody in need and says, "How can I help you, brother or sister? What can I do to help save your life?"

Listen, there are wonderful Government programs, and they will continue to exist so long as they're producing good results. But one of the things we've got to recognize in this country is that coming out of our churches and synagogues and mosques are programs all designed to help save lives. And our society should not fear allowing faith-based programs to competitively bid for social service grants, if we're focused on changing the country.

I'm running again and asking for your help because I've got a plan to make the country safer. I know what we need to do. We've got a plan to make the country stronger, and we've got a plan to make the country better for every citizen. I'm not talking about a handful; I'm talking about everyone, in every corner of America.

I'll tell you what, let me answer some questions. I'll be glad to answer a couple of ques-

tions, and then I've got to head back downtown to get some work done.

Yes, ma'am.

Education

Q. Yes, education. I'm a fourth grade teacher.

The President. First, let me stop you. Thank you for teaching.

Q. You're welcome. What can you do for our children in public education, private education, that will make a difference in America today?

The President. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to continue to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations, is what we're going to do. And by that, I mean—let me tell you what that means. That means if you set the bar low, you're going to get lousy results. It starts with recognizing that every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract and that we must not allow systems to develop that just shuffle kids through. That's what's happening; let's be frank about it. We had systems—school systems around this country that evidently didn't think certain kids could learn, so they just moved them on, you know? And guess what happened? When they came out at the end, they couldn't read. And everybody went, "Oops, what went wrong?"

So we've changed that in Washington. We've increased Federal funding. Title I money is up by 52 percent since I became the President. Elementary and secondary school programs are up by 49 percent. Those are healthy increases in spending. But—well, there's more than just spending when it comes to schools. Now we're asking the question, show us. See, for the first time the Federal Government is saying to school districts, we expect to see results. We want our kids reading by—at grade level by the third grade. There's nothing wrong with asking that. It seems like a legitimate request.

And in this program, the No Child Left Behind law, it says that if you are not reading by grade level by the third grade, there's extra help. See, what we know—and the Congressman and the Senator understand this very well—is that we know accountability

systems can be used to change lives, as opposed—you don't use the accountability system to punish people. You use the accountability system to determine where you need extra help. It's a way to determine whether or not the curriculum is working.

Listen, some of the reading programs around the country don't work. They've got—they use the wrong methodology. And we need to know that, don't we? If we expect every child to be learning at grade level, we need to know. And so first thing we've done is, we've changed the whole attitude toward public schools. It's an optimistic attitude. It says, we know every child can read and we expect every child to read, and therefore, why don't you show us? And if not, there will be extra help.

We need to, by the way, bring that attitude to our preschool programs. I believe that—I know there's curriculum available for preschoolers that provide them the basics for reading. And I think our Head Start programs ought to be encouraged to adopt very simple curricula, but based upon the science of reading. My friend Reid Lyons at the NIH is a pro, an expert. He understands how kids learn to read. And therefore, it seems to make sense, since we're spending Federal dollars on Head Start, if as part of the core curriculum of Head Start be to lay the foundation for little kids reading. We need intensive reading programs. You got me started here, and I'm going to keep going.

I've laid out intensive reading programs for kids in junior high and high school. We need to intervene now, before it's too late. We can no longer say, "Gosh, let's hope for the best," because we're now living in a world where if you can't think, it's going to be hard to be a productive worker in the workplace. And so, therefore, this economy is changing; education must change with it.

By the way, we've added a million kids over my administration who've received Pell grants to go to college. That's an achievement; I want to thank the Congress for working with us on that. It says, basically, when you're coming out of high school with the ability to go to college and you're poor, we're going to help you go. See, part of making sure that kids work hard in high school is that they realize there's help coming out of

high school in order to be able to continue to realize their dreams.

No, we're making great progress on education. There's more to do, and that's why I want to continue being the President.

Any other questions here? Yes, ma'am.

Small and Minority Business/Tax Policy

Q. Hi. I'm a woman businessowner, along with my husband. And I'd like to know what encouragement you have for minority business development at a Federal and local level for contracting. Thank you.

The President. Yes. No, I appreciate that. First of all, the SBA is geared up to help small minority businesses. We've increased the number of loans out of SBA by 40 percent, all aimed at spreading the entrepreneurial spirit.

Secondly, the best thing that can happen—I can't speak for local government. You're going to have to call the mayor or the Governor or something like that, anyway. [Laughter] But I can talk about Federal contracting. And the best thing—I think Federal contracting ought to be used to enhance entrepreneurship and small businesses. And therefore, we've got to make sure that Federal contracts are broken down to small—smaller contracts so small businesses have a chance to participate.

By the way, good tax policy—I can't emphasize enough the need to have good tax policy. If you're a small business and your small business is beginning to grow, and the Government runs the taxes up on you, it's going to make it harder to survive, pure and simple. And that's why it's very important for us in this campaign—for people listening to this campaign to remember that when you got about \$2.2 trillion of new money promised to spend, you've got to figure out how to pay for it. Yes, I know how he's going to pay for it: You're going to pay for it. But we're not going to let him. That's why we're going to win the campaign.

Yes.

Iran/North Korea/Cooperation in Foreign Policy

Q. I'm concerned about the nuclear threat coming out of Iran.

The President. Yes.

Q. I was just wondering if you could comment on that.

The President. Well, I appreciate that. He's concerned about Iran, as am I. That's why early in my administration I talked about Iran in vivid terms. First of all, you've got to understand that every situation requires a different response when it comes to foreign policy, and so we tailor our responses based upon the reality of the moment. And first is to make it clear to the world that Iran must abandon her nuclear ambitions. That's part of the role of the United States, and to work with others to send that same message. The IAEA is the agency principally responsible for the Iranian nuclear program. We're working closely with them. We're making sure that we ask the hard questions to the IAEA so they ask the hard questions to the Iranians. We got the Iranians to sign what's called—not we, the world got the Iranians to decide—to sign what's called an additional protocol, which will allow for site inspections that normally would not have been allowed under IAEA. In other words, the groundwork, the ability to inspect as best as possible, is in place.

Secondly, the tactics of our—as you know, we don't have relationships with Iran. I mean, that's—ever since the late '70s we have no contacts with them, and we've totally sanctioned them. In other words, there's no sanctions—you can't—we're out of sanctions. And so we've relied upon others to send the message for us. And the foreign ministers of Germany, France, and Great Britain have gone in as a group to send a message on behalf of the free world that Iran must comply with the demands of the free world. And that's where we sit right now. And my attitude is we've got to continue to keep pressure on the Government and help others keep pressure on the Government, so there's kind of a universal condemnation of illegal weapons activities.

As well, the United States does have an opportunity to speak clearly to those who love freedom inside of Iran, and we are. There is a significant diaspora, here in the United States, of Iranian Americans who long for their homeland to be liberated and free. We're working with them to send messages to their loved ones and their relatives

through different methodology. And one method—and very overt, I might add—we've got radio broadcasts, a new radio broadcast system going into Iran—say, “Listen, we hear your voice. We know you want to be free, and we stand with you in your desire to be free.”

I will tell you, a free Iraq is going to send a clear message to people in Iran as well, that free societies are possible. That's why I say this is an historic moment in our history, and it really is. When you think about it, a free country in the midst of the Middle East will send a very clear signal that freedom is possible. In other words, there are reformers and people who want to be free watching carefully as to whether or not this country, which is the beacon of freedom, is strong enough not to wilt when the pressure gets significant.

I tell this story a lot—I'll share it with you—about my friend Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. And we were having Kobe beef one day and—it's quite good, I might add, and—[laughter]—this was in Tokyo. And you know what? We were talking about another subject that I'm sure is a concern of yours as well, and that's North Korea. And it was an amazing conversation, when you think about it, wasn't it, that I was talking to my friend, 55 years or so after World War II had ended, about how to keep the peace in a troubled part of the world. We made the decision—I made the decision that, on North Korea, that the kind of bilateral negotiations weren't working. If you might recall, my predecessor thought he had an arrangement with the North Koreans that they did not honor. And it's a lesson that it's important to remember.

So I made the decision to bring other nations in to help send the same message to North Korea. It's a more effective way of doing things if there's more than one voice willing to say the same thing. That's why China is very much involved in the process now, which is helpful. And Japan is too. And so Prime Minister Koizumi and I were talking about how to make sure the six-party talks sent the same message to Kim Chong-il, which is, get rid of your nuclear weapons program and there will be—in a verifiable way that gives us all confidence that he has done

so, and then perhaps there's a way to help them economically.

And during the course of the conversation, I became very thankful because my predecessors believed that Japan could self-govern. If you read some of the editorials and some of the writings right after World War II, there was a lot of doubt as to whether or not a country like Japan could self-govern, could be a democracy. But there were people here who had great faith in the transformation power—the transformative power of liberty and stood their ground. And there I was talking to a duly elected official of Japan about peace.

Someday, an American President is going to be talking to elected officials, an elected official from Iraq, talking about how to keep the peace. Free societies are peaceful societies. And free societies join this fantastic alliance of those of us who long for peace deep in our heart, an alliance of countries willing to work on the tough issues like Iran and North Korea, all aimed at bringing these difficult solutions to a peaceful conclusion.

And anyway, it's a long answer to an important question, but nevertheless, it's one—[*applause*—let me finish; one other thing. It says that good foreign policy works with other countries, and we will. Remember now, one of the dangers of this world is the proliferation of weapons and technologies. And there's over 60 nations involved with the Proliferation Security Initiative, an initiative that we helped put together during my administration. Some 40 nations are involved in Afghanistan. Nearly 30 nations are involved in Iraq. We've got good, strong alliances of people working together. I'm never going to turn over our national security needs to leaders of other countries, however.

Yes, sir. You look like a man with a question.

Q. I drive a school bus, so I don't need your microphone. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay, good.

Judicial Nominees

Q. [*Inaudible*—concerned about the judicial nominees. I watch it every day on C-SPAN. I'd like to know what—[*inaudible*].

The President. I appreciate that. Listen, his question is about the judicial nominees

and the fact that they're roadblocked in the United States Senate by procedures that—have they ever been used before, George, the filibuster on judicial nominees? Never been used? According to Allen, they've never been used before. [*Laughter*] Not to this extent—he qualified it. [*Laughter*]

But it's a problem, because I think my nominees deserve an up-or-down vote on the floor of the United States Senate. So I guess, you know, they're playing politics. I appreciate your question, because they're playing politics. That's all that is. And I'm picking good people from all walks of life. I named a man to be on the DC District Court, Miguel Estrada, first-generation American citizen, a brilliant man. What a story. He comes over from—comes up from Honduras, learns the language, works hard, got a family that loved him. He's now named for the circuit court and gets turned down. They wouldn't even give him a vote. And that's just pure politics.

You know what the answer to your question is? We've got to elect more Senators who aren't going to play politics with my nominees. I'm going to keep talking about it too. They may think they're going to wear me down; they're not. I'm going to keep talking about it. I'm going to keep telling the people of this country they've got a clear choice when it comes to President. They want people on the court who will strictly interpret the law, they ought to put me back in. If they want somebody who is going to put judges that will try to write the law from the bench, they got the wrong man in George W. I'm not changing, either.

All right, last question. You've got one? Go ahead, and yell her out. Oh, then he better take the mike, then. Yes, put it up there. Say that again so everybody can hear it.

Support for Volunteer Fire Departments/ Trade Policy

Q. I'm from Southside, Virginia, and I've helped the volunteer fire departments a number of years. We've had times raising money. And since you've been in, the Federal money that you appropriated to us, we appreciate it a lot.

The President. You bet, thanks. First of all, he and I share a couple of things in common. We're both voting for me. [Laughter] And we both support volunteer fire departments. I'm a proud supporter of the Crawford Volunteer Fire Department. And you're—what's your volunteer fire department?

Q. Chase City.

The President. There you go. Chase City, Virginia.

Let me talk about rural life real quick. One of the things—are there any farmers here? Yes, there you go. The farm economy is strong. You know why? One, good policy; good tax policy; and secondly—and thirdly, because we're opening up markets. If you're good at something like growing things, like people in Virginia are, they ought to be selling their product overseas in different markets around the world.

Let me tell you real quick about trade policy. There's a lot of talk about it, and the temptation for the other side is to say, "We'll—I'll handle it by becoming economic isolationists." That's no good, to kind of wall ourselves off from the rest of the world. That's pessimistic. And that will make it harder for small businesses to thrive and people to find good-paying jobs. Here's what—here's the reality of trade. Most Presidents believe that we should open up U.S. markets for foreign goods. You know why? Because it's good for consumers. The more opportunities consumers have to choose, the better price they'll get at better quality. That's the way the marketplace works. And that's the policy today, and opening up our markets has been beneficial to U.S. consumers.

And so the fundamental question is, can we get other countries to treat us the way we treat them? That's trade policy. And the answer is, absolutely, we will.

One way you do so is through agreements—is you negotiate free trade agreements. And we've done so for the benefit of U.S. farmers and manufacturers and entrepreneurs and, eventually, workers, because if you're selling product, for example, in Australia—we just got a new deal with Australia—if you're selling products in Australia, you're going to be working in order

to make the product that the Australians are buying.

And the second thing to do is to enforce laws. That's why we've gone after China a couple of times, to say to China, "You must, if you're going to trade with us, be fair about how you treat our people and our products."

Now, you had a question? What is it? Both of you combine your question; then I've got to go back to work. Okay, you've got two.

Taiwan

Q. Yes, I am Taiwanese American, and I am concerned about China has more than 500 missiles against Taiwan. How do you be able to keep the key area of peace for Taiwan and the world?

The President. Yes, we just make it clear to both sides that our policy hasn't changed—"one China" policy based upon the three communiques, and neither side shall unilaterally change the circumstances by which a peaceful resolution will be achieved. And that's just where we'll keep working both sides to see if we can't see that that very important issue be resolved peacefully. It's essential that both sides understand my position as clearly stated, and I've stated it publicly just like I just did, and I will continue to state it. And I'm convinced this issue can be solved peacefully. It's just going to take some time to do so. And we'll continue to work to see to it that it does.

Where is the lady that wanted to ask a question? Do you have the same question he did or another one? Another one. Okay, this is the last question.

Government Fiscal Accountability/ Federal Deficit

Q. Mine is sort of different. I am more concerned about the Government waste. How do you propose to control either domestic waste within the spending, accountability for spending?

The President. Yes.

Q. And also, especially foreign aid. I tend to develop compassion fatigue when it comes to foreign aid when I hear about the U.N. Oil for Food Programme fraud. That's a very big concern—

The President. Yes.

Q. —because I pay taxes, and I expect it to be spent wisely.

The President. I appreciate that. That's a good question. I was hoping somebody would ask that question. [Laughter] Let me talk about budgeting and spending, and then I'll talk about accountability when it comes to spending.

Let me—I'll start with that. I just came from a meeting with Clay Johnson. He's my close friend that—he was my college roommate, actually—who is the "M" in OMB, Office of Management and Budget. And his job as the "M" in OMB is to say to agencies, we expect there to be results-oriented systems throughout your agencies. And we've actually got a scorecard, a management scorecard, of how well agencies are doing with, for example, responding to taxpayers through e-mail, how well they're doing to make sure their programs are actually delivering results. And so we're working hard to see to it that these giant bureaucracies become results-oriented. There are all kinds of ways to measure, and we've got a good measurement system in place to do so.

There is a—look, my job is to submit budgets that will bring confidence to the marketplaces, as well as to the taxpayers. And that means setting priorities and meeting those priorities without overtaxing the American people. And we have done that. I want you to know that—let me put in the context of the deficit.

Yes, we've got a deficit, for three reasons. One, there was a recession. And a recession costs the Treasury money unless there's a corresponding cut in spending. And there wasn't.

Two, there is a deficit because I made the decision to go after the enemy, and we were going to spend whatever money was necessary to defend ourselves. And the Congress supported me, by and large. Some in the Senate didn't support the \$87 billion. [Laughter]

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. But most of them did, guys like George Allen, who said if you're going to put people in harm's way, they deserve the right pay and right equipment.

Thirdly, part of the reason we have this deficit is because I believed in order to get

the economy moving forward, there should be tax relief. And it's working; the tax relief is working. It's going to be one of the interesting arguments in the campaign. I will make the case that it is working, and that you don't need to run up taxes.

Now, when I first came into office, non-homeland, nondefense discretionary spending increased at 15 percent. This year, the budget we've requested from the House and the Senate is—nondefense, nonhomeland spending, discretionary spending, is increasing at less than 1 percent. And so the step one—step one is to set priorities and hold Congress to working with those priorities. And Congress has been very good. Speaker Hastert and Leader Frist have worked very closely with the administration to achieve good top-line budget numbers. So I can say to you that the deficit will be cut in half over the next 5 years, and we've just got to keep working that way.

And so there's two—I kind of took two points from your questions. One was, the overall budget numbers, how does it relate—are we able to contain spending to the point where we can say to the people that this deficit is beginning to decrease? Now remember, the deficit, again, was caused by recession. We're coming out of that—we're out of it. Secondly, it was caused by the war. We're still in the war. And, thirdly, the tax relief helped us generate more revenues.

And by the way, in the midseason—midsession review—I don't know if you saw this, George, or not, but the projected deficit of last February has already been decreased fairly significantly because the economy is getting stronger. And when the economy strengthens, more revenues come into—[applause].

I've got to go back—listen, I've got to get back to the White House and make sure we're spending money wisely. But I want to thank you for your question. I want to thank you all for coming today. I want to thank you for support. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:05 a.m. in the Ernst Community Cultural Center Gymnasium. In his remarks, he referred to Robert G. Templin, Jr., president, Northern Virginia Community College; Virginia Attorney General Jerry W. Kilgore;

and G. Reid Lyon, Chief, Child Development and Behavior Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Marek Belka of Poland and an Exchange With Reporters

August 9, 2004

President Bush. We'll have two opening statements and two questions per side. I'll call on somebody, and the Prime Minister will call on somebody.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. Thank you for coming. We've just had a very good visit, but that's what you would expect when two friends are talking about important issues.

We talked about foreign policy. We talked about economic issues. We talked about the close ties between our respective peoples. And it's my honor to welcome you here, sir. I appreciate your candid observations and appreciate the fact that not only did you serve your nation and frankly, the world, in Baghdad, you've now agreed to serve your nation as the Prime Minister of your country. So welcome here to Washington, DC.

Prime Minister Belka. Well, it's one of a series of very important visits in our dialog. Next month in Warsaw, we're having the beginning of strategic dialog between the United States and Poland. And what happened here was really a beginning of this dialog or at least an introduction to these talks.

We covered a very broad range of issues, from Euro-Atlantic alliance, from the state of relationship between Europe and America, to Middle East, a wider Middle East initiative, and Iraq. We also touched upon our bilateral issues, including our economic cooperation, traveling, and so on and so on.

Well, it's almost unbelievable how we could squeeze so many issues in a relatively short conversation. It was a very good conversation, very good exchange of opinions. And, well, it sets ground for further cooperation and further good, good talks between our people and ourselves.

President Bush. Good job.

We'll start off with Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Iraqi Insurgents in Najaf

Q. Mr. President, U.S. forces have been fighting for 5 days in Najaf against the militia of Muqtada Al Sadr. The U.S. once said it was going to capture or kill him. What's our policy now?

President Bush. Our policy is to work with Prime Minister Alawi and support the Iraqis as they move toward elections. Our troops were engaged against Sadr's militia, and so were the Iraqis. And it appears that we're making pretty good progress about stabilizing Najaf. But Prime Minister Alawi is now in charge of the country. He is a good, strong leader who cares deeply about the aspirations of his people, and he is somebody we're working with. And if he's got some suggestions to make, we're more than willing to listen to him. That's why Ambassador Negroponte is there, and the Ambassador will interface with the Iraqi government at their request.

Polish Forces in Iraq

Q. Mr. President, Polish Government is going to significantly reduce number of Polish troops in Iraq early next year. Did you ask Polish Prime Minister not to do that? And could you both comment on the fact that 73 percent of Poles are opposed to Polish military presence in Iraq?

President Bush. I'll be glad to talk about opinion polls. I try to make my decisions based upon what I think is right. And removing Saddam Hussein from power was the right thing to do. The world is safer for it, and the American people are safer for it. The Polish people are safer for it, and the Iraqi people are better off because of it.

And I'll let the Prime Minister talk about troops. The Poles have been great allies. When we first went in to enforce the demands of the free world after Saddam Hussein once again defied the demands of the free world, Polish special forces were right there. And they performed brilliantly. They're great troops, and they're a great credit to the people of Poland.

And then when the—it became apparent we would need stabilizing forces to help this

country become a free country, the Polish Government and the Polish people were very generous and provided not only troops but leadership in a very important sector of the country. So the Prime Minister, I know, is very proud, justifiably so, about the contributions that Poland has made to making the world a better place.

Q. Mr. President—

President Bush. Hold on a second, please.

Prime Minister Belka. Well, I guess, no one wants to stay in Iraq forever. It's a sovereign country. It has its own internationally recognized government. It has its own rules, that is—that are developing. And we treat our presence in Iraq as serving this country to stabilize and stand on its own feet. We didn't discuss dates, numbers. What we discussed is the way—how the situation in Iraq develops, how the political calendar, how the political process is going on, and how is it—how it shapes the character and size of our presence in this country. That's what is most important in our presence in Iraq.

I confirm that Polish troops, in our opinion, are doing right things. They behave gallantly. They show professionalism and also are quite successful in developing good working relations with the local leaders, helping them not only in keeping order but also in developing institutions, rebuilding their economy, their schools, hospitals. Well, this is not a typical military operation. It's a stabilization in all sense of this word.

President Bush. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

National Economy

Q. Mr. President, with the economy not producing a whole lot of new jobs, are you considering adjustments or additions to your economic plan to try to give it a boost? And would an increase in interest rates tomorrow help or hurt?

President Bush. Monetary policy is decided independently from the White House. Secondly, the economy is strong, and it's getting better. Imagine me being able to say to the Prime Minister of Poland, in spite of a recession, emergency, attacks, war, and corporate scandals, we're growing and growing

quite substantially. We've added nearly 1.5 million jobs over the last 12 months.

And what we don't need to do is run up the taxes on the American people. This campaign is going to be talking about visions, about how to keep the economic recovery going, and there's a clear difference of opinion as to how to do it. I believe taxes ought to be low. I know we need tort reform. I know we need an energy policy. I know we need reasonable health policy to help hold down the costs, and that stands in stark contrast to my opponents who are willing to raise taxes and not willing to fight for tort reform, for example. But I'm optimistic about the economic vitality of the country.

Visa Policy

Q. Mr. President, when is the United States going to lift visas for Polish citizens, or at least this \$100 fee for visas—

President Bush. Well, listen—

Q. —as a gesture of reciprocity?

Prime Minister Belka. We discussed this.

President Bush. Well, I'll tell you, we sure did discuss it, and the Prime Minister was very strong on the subject. He made it very clear what—what his opinion is and the opinion of his Government and the expectations of the Polish people. And because of his persuasiveness, there's now a preclearance procedure that will be taking place at the Warsaw airport. Secretary Tom Ridge is—Ridge is here today, and he'll be given instructions to accommodate the Prime Minister's wishes that we begin a reform of the process. And it will start with preclearance process.

And I want to thank the Prime Minister for being such a strong advocate and—pretty clear where he stands. And, hopefully, this will be a step in the right direction for the people of a country whose friendship we value.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Muqtada Al Sadr, Iraqi Shiite cleric whose militia engaged in an uprising in Iraq which began in early April; Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; U.S. Ambassador to Iraq John D. Negroponte; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on Signing the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2004

August 9, 2004

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2443, the “Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2004.” The Act authorizes appropriations for the United States Coast Guard, facilitates navigation and shipping, and strengthens the security of maritime transportation.

To the extent that provisions of the Act, including sections 217, 708(c)(2), and 803(c)(11), call for submission of legislative recommendations to the Congress, the executive branch shall construe such provisions in a manner consistent with the President’s constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President shall judge necessary and expedient. Accordingly, the affected departments and agencies shall ensure that any reports or recommendations submitted to the Congress are subjected to appropriate executive branch review and approval before submission.

To ensure consistency with the Appointments Clause of the Constitution, the executive branch shall construe the phrase “if acceptable to the President and the Senate” as used in section 220 of the Act to require nomination by the President and the advise and consent of the Senate for the appointments addressed by that section.

George W. Bush

The White House,
August 9, 2004.

NOTE: H.R. 2443, approved August 9, was assigned Public Law No. 108–293.

**Executive Order 13351—
Establishing an Emergency Board To Investigate a Dispute Between the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and Its Conductors Represented by the United Transportation Union**

August 9, 2004

A dispute exists between the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and its conductors represented by the United Transportation Union.

The dispute has not heretofore been adjudged under the provisions of the Railway Labor Act, as amended, 45 U.S.C. 151–188 (the “Act”).

A first emergency board to investigate and report on the dispute was established on April 12, 2004, by Executive Order 13334 of April 10, 2004. The emergency board terminated upon issuance of its report. Subsequently, its recommendations were not accepted by the parties.

A party empowered by the Act has requested that the President establish a second emergency board pursuant to section 9A of the Act (45 U.S.C. 159a).

Section 9A(e) of the Act provides that the President, upon such request, shall appoint a second emergency board to investigate and report on the dispute.

Now, Therefore, by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 9A of the Act, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Establishment of Emergency Board (“Board”). There is established, effective August 10, 2004, a Board of three members to be appointed by the President to investigate and report on this dispute. No member shall be pecuniarily or otherwise interested in any organization of railroad employees or any carrier. The Board shall perform its functions subject to the availability of funds.

Sec. 2. Report. Within 30 days after the creation of the Board, the parties to the dispute shall submit to the Board final offers for settlement of the dispute. Within 30 days after the submission of final offers for settlement of the dispute, the Board shall submit a report to the President setting forth its selection of the most reasonable offer.

Sec. 3. Maintaining Conditions. As provided by section 9A(h) of the Act, from the time a request to establish a second emergency board is made until 60 days after the Board submits its report to the President, the parties to the controversy shall make no change in the conditions out of which the dispute arose except by agreement of the parties.

Sec. 4. Records Maintenance. The records and files of the Board are records of the Office of the President and upon the Board's termination shall be maintained in the physical custody of the National Mediation Board.

Sec. 5. Expiration. The Board shall terminate upon the submission of the report provided for in section 2 of this order.

George W. Bush

The White House,
August 9, 2004.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register,
8:45 a.m., August 11, 2004]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on August 12.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Porter J. Goss To Be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

August 10, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. I'm pleased to announce my decision to nominate Congressman Porter Goss as the next Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Porter Goss is a leader with strong experience in intelligence and in the fight against terrorism. He knows the CIA inside and out. He's the right man to lead this important agency at this critical moment in our Nation's history.

The work of the CIA is vital to our security. America faces determined enemies who plan in many nations, send trained killers to live among us, and attack without warning. This threat is unprecedented, and to stop them from killing our citizens, we must have the best intelligence possible. The men and women of the CIA must penetrate closed societies and secretive organizations. They must overcome challenges of language and culture and learn things that our adversaries don't want us to know. Because their work is secret, the men and women of the CIA receive little recognition, but they're protecting our country every day.

Since September the 11th, our intelligence professionals have worked with great determination to stop another attack on America, and our country is grateful.

Director George Tenet and acting Director John McLaughlin have served our Nation with distinction and honor. And now, with the agreement of the U.S. Senate, the CIA will have another strong leader in Porter Goss.

I've given Porter an essential mission to lead the Agency for the challenges and threats of a dangerous new century. He is well prepared for this mission. Porter Goss brings a broad experience to this critical job. He's a former Army intelligence officer with a decade of experience in the CIA's clandestine service. He knows the agency, and he knows what is needed to strengthen it. He understands the importance of human intelligence. He was a CIA field officer on two continents. He'll make sure that the men and women of the CIA have the capabilities and skills they need to penetrate the hard targets and denied areas and to get to know the enemy firsthand. He also knows the importance of investing in technologies that allow us to look and listen better. And he will work to ensure the agency remains on the cutting edge of technological change.

As Chairman of the House Select Committee on Intelligence since 1997, and as a Member on the Commission on the Roles and Capabilities of the United States Intelligence Community, he has been a leading voice on intelligence and national security and terrorism. He's been a force for positive change. His experience on Capitol Hill will

serve him well at the CIA, because he's respected on both sides of the aisle and because he understands the important role Congress must play in the effort to improve our Nation's intelligence capabilities.

Over 15 years of service, Porter Goss has built a reputation as a reformer. He'll be a reformer at the Central Intelligence Agency. I look forward to his counsel and his judgments as to how best to implement broader intel reform, including the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

I appreciate your many years, Porter, of service to our country. I appreciate your willingness to serve. I'm grateful that you've agreed to step forward and serve once again. Welcome.

Representative Goss. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I'm obviously deeply honored, and I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity. You've outlined a very strong challenge.

I think every American knows the importance of the best possible intelligence we can get to our decisionmakers. It is vital, as the President has well said. What many Americans don't realize is that we've got an awful lot of people around the globe doing very, very hard work—long hours in dangerous situations. The essence of our intelligence capability is people. And we have some wonderful Americans doing a great job.

I used to be part of them when I worked for CIA. I'm very proud to be associated with them again. And I look forward to the challenges of the future. I also look forward to the confirmation process with the Senate. As a Member right now on the Hill, I know the value of that and the importance of that.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Good job. Thank you, sir.

Representative Goss. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:31 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission). The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks in Pensacola, Florida

August 10, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. What a great welcome. I'm so honored. You know, you're in good country when you've got a guy holding a sign up that says "Bubbas for Bush." No, the heart and soul of America is right here in Pensacola, Florida.

It's an honor to land Air Force One at the Pensacola Naval Air Station, right here in the cradle of naval aviation. And it's an honor to stand with one of the really fine naval aviators in our Nation's history, Senator John McCain. Forty-six years ago this month, Ensign John McCain reported for duty in Pensacola. He trained to fly here; he launched a life of true service to America that continues to this day. As a naval officer, as a Congressman, as a United States Senator from Arizona, John McCain has embodied honor and integrity, courage and strength. And I'm honored to have him by my side.

We're kicking off a bus trip. We're starting here, and we're heading east across the panhandle of this important State. I'm asking for the vote. Everywhere we're going the crowds are big, the enthusiasm is high, and with your help, Dick Cheney and I will be honored to serve this country for 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I wish Laura was here today. She is a wonderful wife, a great mom, and she's doing a fabulous job as this country's First Lady. I'll give you some reasons why I think you ought to put me back into office, but perhaps the most important reason of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm running with a good man in Dick Cheney. Listen, I recognize he's not the prettiest face on the ticket. [Laughter] I didn't pick him for his looks. I picked him because of his experience and his sound judgment and his ability to do the job.

I've been looking around for the Governor. [Laughter] I had a few words for the Governor. Actually, I saw him over the weekend. His son George P. got married. Yes, it was

a great wedding. He's working. He's doing what you want him to do. He's working on behalf of all the people of Florida. I'm proud of the job Jeb is doing as the Governor of this vital State.

I'm honored that your very fine Congressman, Jeff Miller, is traveling with us today. He's doing a heck of a job for the people of the Panhandle. I want to thank all the local and State officials who are here. Thanks for serving your State and our country.

I appreciate Joe Scarborough. I'm glad to know he's still standing and making a living. I kissed his little girl on the way down the stairs. Fortunately, she's got her mom's looks. [Laughter] I appreciate Ricky Skaggs. I'm honored Ricky took time to come over and sing for you all.

I'm honored to be with the men and women who wear our uniform, proud to be here. I want to thank all the veterans who are here today. I want to thank you for setting such a good example.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists. Those are the people who are going to put up the signs and make the phone calls and register the voters. I'm here to ask for your help. Not only I want your vote, I'd like for your help. I'd like you to go to your neighbors—listen, find those discerning Democrats and wise independents as well as our fellow Republicans, and urge them to do their duty on Election Day. See, we have a duty in this country to participate when it comes to voting time. And when you get them headed towards the polls, give them a nudge our way.

Every incumbent who asks for the vote has to answer an essential question, why—why should the American people give me the great privilege of serving as your President for 4 more years? In the past years, Americans have been through a lot together, a whole lot, and we've accomplished a great deal. But there's only one reason to look backward at the record, and that is to determine who will best lead our Nation forward. I'm asking for your vote because so much is at stake. We have much more to do to move this country forward. I want to be your President for 4 more years to make this country safer, to make our economy stronger, and

to make the future better and brighter for every single citizen.

From creating jobs to improving schools, from fighting terror to spreading peace, we've made much progress, and there's more work to be done. We have more to do to make our public schools the centers of excellence we all know they can be, so that no child is left behind in America.

Remember, when we came to office 3½ years ago, too many children were being shuffled from grade to grade, year after year, without learning the basics. So we challenged what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. We raised the bar. We believe in accountability because we want to know whether or not our children are learning to read and write. We believe in local control of schools. We believe in challenging the status quo when the status quo is failing the children of this country. Today, children across America are showing real progress in reading and math. When it comes to improving America's public schools, we're turning the corner, and we're not turning back.

We have more to do. There's more work to do. The world is changing, and the jobs of the future will require greater knowledge and higher-level skills. We're going to reform our high schools to make sure a high school diploma means something. We will expand math and science education so our young people can compete in the high-tech world. We'll expand the use of the Internet to bring high-level training into our classrooms. With 4 more years, we will help a rising generation gain the skills and confidence to achieve the American Dream.

We have more to do to make quality health care available and affordable. When we came to office, too many older Americans could not afford prescription drugs, and Medicare didn't pay for them. You might remember the past debates. Leaders of both political parties had promised prescription drug coverage in campaign after campaign. We got the job done. More than 4 million seniors have signed up for drug discount cards that provide real savings. Beginning in 2006, all seniors on Medicare will be able to choose a plan that suits their needs and gives them coverage for prescription drugs.

To help more people get access to quality care, we've expanded community health centers for low-income Americans. We've created health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their own health care needs. When it comes to giving Americans more choices about their own health care and making health care more affordable, we're moving America forward, and we're not turning back.

This world is changing. Most Americans get their health care coverage through their work. But today, most of the new jobs are created by small businesses, which too often cannot afford to provide health coverage. To help more American families get health insurance, we must allow small employers to join together to purchase insurance at the same discounts big companies are able to do.

To make sure health care is available and affordable, we must end the frivolous lawsuits that raise the cost of health care. You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. *[Laughter]* I made my choice: I'm going to continue to work with the United States Congress for medical liability reform.

We'll do more to harness technology to reduce costs and prevent health care mistakes. We will expand research and seek new cures for terrible diseases. In all we do to improve health care in America, we will make sure that the health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

We'll do more to make this economy stronger. We've come through a lot. We've come through a recession and corporate scandals and terrorist attacks. We've overcome these obstacles because of the hard work of the American people. We've got great workers. We've got great farmers. We've got great ranchers. We've got great entrepreneurs. I also think one of the reasons we've come through this tough period is because of well-timed tax cuts. We didn't try to pick winners or losers. We did it the fair way: If you paid taxes, you got relief. That's a fair way for tax relief. The tax relief helped families with children. The tax relief helped married couples. I mean, what kind of Tax

Code is it that penalizes marriage? We ought to be encouraging marriage in our society. We helped our small businesses. And this time, the check really was in the mail.

Because we acted, our economy since last summer has grown at a rate as fast as any in nearly 20 years. Because we acted, we've added about a million—1.5 million new jobs since last year, last August. The unemployment rate is down to 5.5 percent, well below the national average of the seventies, eighties, and nineties. Because we acted, Florida has added nearly 300,000 jobs since the end of 2001. Florida's unemployment rate is now 4.7 percent. When it comes to creating jobs for American workers, here in Florida you have proved we're moving America forward, and we're not turning back.

There's more work to do. We need to make our economy more job-friendly, America's workplaces more family-friendly. To keep American jobs here in America, regulations must be reasonable and must be fair. Many of you small-business owners know what I'm talking about when it comes to regulations. I can't guarantee anybody in Washington has every read the forms you filled out. *[Laughter]* To keep jobs here in America, we must reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. To keep American jobs in America, we must end the junk lawsuits and enact tort reform. To keep American jobs in America, to keep American jobs here in our country, we must not overspend your money. And we will keep your taxes low.

Listen, to keep jobs here, we must not become economic isolationists. We must be bold about our ability to compete in the world. I believe America's workers and farmers can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere so long as the rules are fair. To keep jobs here, we've got to make sure our workers have the skills necessary to fill the jobs of the 21st century. We're going to offer American workers a lifetime of learning. And to be aggressive in helping them get the training they need for the jobs of the future at places like our community colleges—the education training they offer can be a bridge between people's lives as they are and people's lives as they want them to be.

You know what else we need to do? We need to make sure our families have something they never have enough of, and that is time—time to be with your kids, time to volunteer in your community, time to take care of your parents, time to go back to school. I'm going to work with Congress to enact comp-time and flex-time to help American families better juggle the demands of the workplace.

When you give us 4 more years, this economy is going to be stronger, more small businesses, better and higher-paying jobs. And America will continue to lead the world with the world's strongest economy.

We have more to do to wage and win the war against terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in the world. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

See, the world changed on a terrible September morning, and since that day we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base for Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up terror cells in dozens of countries, including our own. Today, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. And thanks to the United States and thanks to members of our coalition, many young girls now go to school for the first time in Afghanistan.

Because we acted, America and the world are safer. Before September the 11th, Pakistan was a safe transit point for terrorists. Today, Pakistani forces are aggressively helping to round up the terrorists. Pakistan is an ally in the war on terror, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, in Saudi Arabia, terrorists were raising money and recruiting and operating with little opposition. Today, the Saudi Government is taking the fight to Al Qaida, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies have sent a strong and clear message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit

of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. He was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region.

After September the 11th, we looked at all the threats of the world in a new light. One of the lessons of September the 11th is that America must take threats seriously, before they fully materialize. We saw a threat. My administration looked at the intelligence and saw a threat. The United States Congress looked at the same intelligence—members of both political parties, including my opponent—looked at the intelligence and came to the same conclusion.

We went to the United Nations, which looked at the intelligence and demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs, or face serious consequences. After 12 years of defiance, he again refused to comply. He deceived the weapons inspectors. So I had a choice to make: either forget the lessons of September the 11th and take the word of a madman who hated America, or defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America.

Even though we did not find the stockpiles that we expected to find, removing Saddam Hussein from power was the right thing to do. Saddam Hussein had the capability to make weapons of mass destruction. And he could have passed that capability on to terrorist enemies. After September the 11th, that was a chance we could not afford to take. And America and the world are safer because Saddam Hussein sits in a prison cell.

And now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and almost 220 days after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, Senator Kerry now agrees with me that

even though we have not found the stockpile of weapons we all believed were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I want to thank Senator Kerry for clearing that up—although there are still 84 days left in the campaign.

We have more to do. I'm seeking the office because we must continue to work with our friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists and foreign fighters in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. See, you can't talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. You cannot hope for the best. We must engage these enemies around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a strong coalition to help us defeat the terror. There's 60 nations involved with the Proliferation Security Initiative. Nearly 40 nations are in Afghanistan. Some 30 nations are involved in Iraq. I know you join me in thanking the leaders of those countries who have committed their troops to peace and freedom around the world. We'll continue to strengthen our alliances and work with our friends for the cause of security and peace. But I'll never turn over national—America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

We'll keep our commitments to help Afghanistan and Iraq become peaceful, democratic societies. Listen, these two nations are now governed by strong leaders. These are people who are willing to listen to the hopes and aspirations of their people. The moms and dads of Afghanistan and Iraq want their children to grow up in a peaceful and hopeful society. That's what they want. People of Afghanistan and Iraq are beginning to make the hard work of going from tyranny to freedom. More and more troops are stepping up in Iraq—Iraqis saying, "What can I do to secure my country so my family can grow up in a peaceful world?"

The people of these countries can count on us. When we acted to protect our own security, we promised to help deliver them from tyranny, to restore their sovereignty, and to set them on the path to liberty. And

when America gives its word, America keeps its word.

In these crucial times, America's commitments are kept by the men and women of our military. At bases across our country and the world, I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. The cause of freedom is in really good hands. And anytime—and those who wear our Nation's uniform deserve the full support of our Nation's Government.

Last September, while our troops were in combat in both Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their missions. The legislation provided funding for body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. In the Senate only a small, out-of-the-mainstream minority of 12 Senators voted against the legislation. And 2 of those 12 Senators are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Senator Kerry tried to explain his vote this way: "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." [Laughter] That's not the way they talk here in the Panhandle of Florida. He's had some different explanations. He said he was proud of his vote, and then he further said the whole thing is a complicated matter. [Laughter] There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We will work to change the conditions that give rise to terror: poverty and hopelessness, resentment. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples in their neighborhood, a neighborhood that is desperate for freedom. See, free nations do not export terror. Free nations enhance the dreams of their citizens. Free nations are peaceful nations.

By serving the ideal of liberty, we're bringing hope to others, and that makes our country more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're spreading the peace. And by serving the ideal of liberty, we serve the highest

values of our own country. Freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

We have more to do to protect America. There's enemies who still hate us, and they're plotting. My opponent says that going to war with the terrorists is actually improving their recruiting efforts. The logic is upsidetdown. It shows a dangerous misunderstanding of the enemy we face. During the nineties, these terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us—long before we went to war with them. They don't need an excuse for their hatred. It is wrong to blame America for the anger and evil of the killers. We don't create terrorists by fighting back; we defeat terrorist by fighting back.

I agree with the conclusion the 9/11 Commission has said: Because of the actions we have taken since September the 11th, our homeland is safer, but we're not yet safe. I understand that. The way to make this country more secure is to be on the offense, is to find these terrorists and to bring the enemies to justice. And the way to make this country more secure is to start the hard process of reform.

We've transformed our defenses. We created a new Department of Homeland Security. We passed the PATRIOT Act to give our law enforcement officers tools to track terrorists. The mission of the FBI is now focused on preventing terrorism. We're integrating intelligence and law enforcement better than we ever have before. We're already taking action on a large majority of the 9/11 Commission Report. And we've got more to do to better secure our ports and borders and to train our first-responders, to dramatically improve intelligence-gathering capability.

Today I nominated a fine Floridian, Congressman Porter Goss, to head the Central Intelligence Agency. And we'll work with Congress to create a position of the National Intelligence Director so that one person is in charge of coordinating all our intelligence efforts overseas and at home.

These reforms aren't going to be easy. Reform is never easy in Washington. There's a lot of entrenched interests there, people who are willing to defend the status quo. It's

not enough to advocate reform. You've got to be able to get the job done. See, when it came to reforming schools, provide excellent education for our children, we got the job done, and results matter. When it came to health care reforms to give our families more access and more choices, we're getting the job done, and results matter. When it came to improving our economy and creating jobs, results matter. When it comes to better securing our homeland, when it comes to spreading the peace, results matter. When it comes to electing a President, results matter.

Listen, we're living in changing times. These are changing times, and they're exciting times. And Government needs to stand side by side with the American people during these changing times. Do you know what that says to me? It says to me, we've got to continue to promote an ownership society in America. We want you to own and control your own health care accounts, so that if you go from one job to the next, the health care account is yours and stays with you.

You know, I'm worried about younger workers in America. I'm worried about whether or not the Social Security system is fiscally sound enough for our younger workers. Old guys like me and McCain, we're set when it comes to Social Security. But to make sure the Social Security system works, we've got to let our younger workers have an option of taking some of their own money and establishing a personal savings account that they can pass from one generation to the next.

I'll tell you, I love the fact that more people now own their home in America than ever before. We love homeownership in my administration. I met Jack and Julie Broomes behind stage. They said, "This year, thanks to your tax relief, we were able to buy a home." What a fantastic thought, to have that good family open their door and say, "Welcome to my house."

We believe in ownership in this administration. We want more people owning their small business. I love the fact that more minority—minorities are owning their own business. It's a hopeful sign for America. In

a changing world, one way to help the American people is to promote an ownership society. When you own something you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

In this world of rapid change, there's going to be some things that won't change: our belief in liberty and opportunity and the non-negotiable demands of human dignity. We believe in the individual values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We honor the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every being counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. This culture of our country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. Listen, if you're worried about the quality of the education in this community, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

The strength of this country is the hearts and souls of our citizens; that's the strength of America. Over the next 4 years, I'll continue to rally the armies of compassion and call upon people to help solve some of the most difficult problems of our society. Government can hand out money; it can't put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. That happens when a loving soul puts their arm around a lonely heart and says, "I love you. What can I do to help you?" I'm running for 4 more years to continue to call upon the great strength of America so we can change our country, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. It's a time when we need firm resolve and clear vision. See, none of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I'll never forget. I remember the people in hard-hats yelling, "Whatever it takes." I remember walking the ropeline. A guy grabbed me by his arm. He had just been searching in the rubble for a loved one. He said, "Do not let me down."

As we all did that day, that fellow and the people searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I have a duty that goes on. I wake up every morning thinking how best to keep America safe. I will never relent in defending our country, whatever it takes.

We have come through a lot together. We've done hard work. We're moving this country forward. During the next 4 years, we'll spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of America. We'll pass the enduring values of our country on to another generation. We will lead the cause of freedom and peace, and we will prevail.

Four years ago, I traveled this great State and our wonderful country asking for the vote, and I made a pledge to my fellow Americans. I said if you honored me with this great responsibility, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I had been elected. And with your help, I will do so for 4 more years.

May God bless you. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. at the Pensacola Civic Center. In his remarks, he referred to former Representative Joe Scarborough of Florida; country music entertainer Ricky Skaggs; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission).

**Remarks in a Discussion at
Okaloosa-Walton College in
Niceville, Florida**
August 10, 2004

The President. Thank you all very much. Let's get started here. We'd better get started before all the oxygen leaves. *[Laughter]* Thanks for coming. I'm on a bus tour today. You know why? I think you have to ask for the vote if you're running for office, and I'm here to ask for the vote. That's what I'm doing.

I'm here to tell you there's more to do. We've done a lot, but there's more to do. I have a reason for running, and I'm going to share some of those reasons with you in a little bit. But first, I want to thank you all for coming. I'm here for another reason, and that's to ask for your help. I need your help to get people registered to vote. Listen, there's a lot of people for us out there. If that many people are standing in the rain, it means we got a pretty good shot here in the Panhandle.

But I can't win it without your help. And so I'm asking you to register your friends and neighbors. See, I believe everybody has a duty to vote. I believe that's a—you know, the other day in Afghanistan they were talking about, "Oh, maybe they're not too interested in voting." And I think there was maybe 3 or 4 million had registered to vote. And the Taliban drug some women out of a bus and killed them because they were involved in the electoral process, and a lot of people say, "Well, gosh, that's going to discourage people from doing their duty, from participating in a free society." Now there is over 8 million people who've registered to vote in Afghanistan.

It's an amazing story, isn't it? It's an amazing story how people respond when given a chance to exercise their—what we believe are their God-given rights as free people. We need to do the same thing here in America. So I'm here to ask you to get your fellow citizens to participate. Of course, once you get them headed to the polls, I've got a suggestion on who they might be for. *[Laughter]* And that's what we're going to talk about today.

I'm proud of brother Jeb. I had the honor of spending the weekend with him. His old-

est son, George P., got married, and the father of the groom handled his duties perfectly. *[Laughter]* He's a great Governor and a great brother. And I love him a lot. I love him a lot.

And I love the First Lady a lot too. When I asked Laura to marry me, she was a public school librarian. *[Applause]* There you go, yes! She didn't care for politics or politicians. *[Laughter]* Now she's the First Lady of the United States, and she's doing a great job. She really is. I wish she were here today, but she's campaigning in the Midwest, and she's doing a really neat experience. I like to tell people I've got reasons why I'd like you to put me back in, but perhaps the most important one is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

I'm going to talk a little bit about what I'd like to do. We've got some citizens here who are going to help me make some points about how America can be a better place. And then I'm going to answer some questions if we've got time.

I first want to say thanks to my friend John McCain. John is an amazing guy who—he's an amazing person. He's a great public servant. He served his Nation in many ways. And I'm proud to be traveling with him. It's—he's a lot of fun to be with. Plus, it helps—*[laughter]*—helps to have him stand by my side. So thanks for coming, friend. Appreciate you being here.

After the ranch, he and I are going to go over to Crawford—I mean, after campaigning here in Panama City, he and I are going to go over to Crawford, and I'm going to show him the ranch. Then we're going to New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, and Iowa.

I want to thank Congressman Jeff Miller, who is doing a fine job for the people. You're doing a great job, Congressman. Thanks for coming.

Statehouse Speaker-designate Allan Bense—he's with us today. Allan, thank you for traveling. Where are you? He was with us. He probably heard I'm going to talk for about 45 minutes and left. *[Laughter]* I'm proud to be traveling as well with Bev Kilmer. She's running for the congressional seat right next door to this one. Good luck to you. Thanks for coming.

I'm proud to be here at Okaloosa-Walton College. I want to thank Bob Richburg, the president of this fine institution.

I tell people I'm running again because I want to work to make America safer, stronger, and better. The biggest task we have in this country is to fight and win this war on terror. The most solemn duty a President has, the most solemn duty those of us who hold high office have is to do everything we can to safeguard our country.

I never thought I'd be having to say this when I ran in 2000—John, we campaigned together. I don't remember saying, "I anticipate war." Nobody wants to be the war President. People want to be the peace President. People want to be able to say, "Gosh, the world is peaceful." But that's not what happened under my watch. The country changed on September the 11th, 2001, and it's vital for the President to clearly see the world the way it is.

I'll tell you some lessons I've learned that I don't think the country should ever forget. First of all, these people that killed us, they were training for years. They were preparing for years. They're evil people who cannot stand what we believe in. You cannot negotiate with these people. You cannot—these are not the kind of people you can reason with. You cannot hope for the best. That's just the nature of these people. It's hard for the American people to understand the nature of somebody who's willing to kill an innocent child to achieve an objective. That's not the way we think. Nevertheless, we must be realistic about the nature of these folks.

The second lesson after September the 11th is when you say something, you better mean it, in order to make the world a more peaceful place. I recognized right after September the 11th, we were in a different kind of conflict. I noticed some World War II veterans who are here who fought a different kind of war. Freedom and liberty were at stake, but it was a different kind of war. This is a different kind of war here. This is a war that said not only must we bring justice to our enemies, wherever they hide, we cannot allow nations to provide them safe harbor or training or to feed or equip them. We just can't do that. In order to be able to protect ourselves—[*applause*].

So that's why I said to the Taliban—we gave the Taliban a warning: Quit harboring these people; quit feeding these people; quit providing safe haven so they can train to come and kill. And the Taliban chose defiance. And thanks to the United States and a coalition of the willing, the Taliban no longer is in power. And the world is safer for it. The world is safer for it. You know why? We've now got an ally in the war on terror. Al Qaida can no longer find—you know, attack and escape into the confines of a sovereign nation. That no longer is possible. But guess what else happened that is important? We liberated people. We freed people.

You know, I was in Cleveland the other evening. I helped kick off the International Children's Games. And I was standing up giving this welcoming address, and right to my right was a group of young girls from Afghanistan. They were part of a soccer team, a young girls soccer team. Now, that probably doesn't sound like a momentous event, but think about it. These young children couldn't even go to school under the Taliban. Their mothers were often paraded into public squares and humiliated, because this country was under the clutches of a barbaric regime that had evil in their hearts.

Our action in Afghanistan fulfilled a word. It said if you harbor, you'll be held accountable. The world is peaceful for it when we keep our word. Our action in Afghanistan has converted an enemy into an ally in the war on terror. And our action in Afghanistan is a part of freeing 50 million people—25 in Afghanistan, 25 in Iraq. And the world is better for it.

Another lesson of September the 11th is that when we see threats, we must deal with them before they fully materialize. See, prior to September the 11th, we thought if we saw a threat, we could deal with it if we felt like it or maybe it would go away; maybe it wouldn't happen, because we felt secure. Remember those days? I do. I also know what it's like now to be vulnerable to the attacks of enemies that could care less about the rules of warfare. I mean, these are uncivilized people. And probably the most dangerous—not probably—the most dangerous worry that we should have is whether or not these

killers are able to get weapons of mass destruction. And where would they get them? Well, they'd get them from people who have the capability of making them, and they'd get them from people that hate us.

So I looked at Iraq and saw a threat. Think about Iraq. This is a country that had—were firing at our pilots. This is a country with which we'd already had a war. This is a country which had used weapons of mass destruction against its own people and against its neighbors. This is a country that paid families of suiciders. This is a country that allowed terrorist networks to be in and out of their borders. Remember Abu Nidal? He's the guy that killed Leon Klinghoffer. His network was in Iraq. Zarqawi—he's still in there chopping people's heads off. His network was in Iraq. And they were in and out of the country.

And so we looked at the facts and said this guy is a threat. That's what we looked at. And then we all looked at the intelligence as well. And my administration looked at it. The United States Congress looked at it. Members of both parties in the Congress looked at that intelligence. My opponent looked at that intelligence. And we all came to the same conclusion: Saddam Hussein was a threat.

Now, I recognize it's important to rally the world on issues such as these. And so I went to the United Nations and said, "We think he's a threat. What do you think?" And the United Nations Security Council voted 15 to nothing, saying—and here's what they said. They said, "We think you're a threat, so disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." That's what the world said. By the way, it's not the first time the world had said it, is it? The world had been saying it for over a decade. And every time the world said it, Saddam kind of—didn't take it very seriously, and he became dangerous.

And so I had a choice to make. I had a choice as to whether or not to trust this madman, to trust whether or not we would be more secure with him in his own country, defying the demands of the free world once again. This is a guy who had used weapons of mass destruction. Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th, or do what I think

is necessary to protect this country? Given that choice, I'll protect America every time.

You know, they ask you, they say, "Well, you haven't found the stockpiles you thought were going to be there." And they're right. We thought there would be stockpiles of weapons there. But we do know that he had the capability of making weapons. And we do know that he had the capability of passing that knowledge on to an enemy which hates us. He was dangerous. Knowing what I know today, I would have still made the same decision. The world is better off, and America is safer. No question about it.

Let me tell you something. I want you all to think about a world in which Saddam Hussein was still in power. There's an enemy out there. He'd have been stronger if he had been in power still. The world is safer and America is safer because he sits in a prison cell.

I want to share a story with you about seven Iraqi citizens who came to see me in the Oval Office. The Oval Office is a powerful place. It's the kind of place where my mother walks in and feels so overwhelmed, she won't tell me what to do. *[Laughter]* That's powerful. In walk seven Iraqis. They had all had their right hands cut off by Saddam Hussein. You know why? Because the dinar had declined in value—that was his currency—and he was looking for a scapegoat. And he found these seven small merchants, small-business people. I asked one guy, "Why you?" And he said, well, he happened to sell dinars on that particular day to buy, I think he said euros, so he could buy gold to make jewelry. And he just sold on the wrong day, because he got plucked out of the population and, like his other six friends there, had his right hand cut off and an X branded into his forehead.

And these fellows walk into the Oval Office—the reason why is, is a fellow named Marvin Zindler; he's a newsman out of Houston—*[applause]*—there you go—who heard of their plight. He had done well, set up a foundation, flew them over to Houston so they could outfitted with new hands. *[Applause.]* Yes. The contrast between a society where one person gets to decide the fate of somebody's right hand and a society that's willing to raise people who contribute to heal

the hands is the difference between Iraq and totalitarianism and tyranny, and a free country like America.

It's hard work. It is hard work to go from a society in which somebody can cut your right hand off just like that, to a society that adopts the responsibilities and habits of a free country. And that's what you're seeing. You're seeing that conversion. And it's hard. I'm telling you, it's hard. But we've got some strong allies, starting with the Prime Minister of Iraq, Prime Minister Alawi. They tell me the story of him. He was in London, England. He was in exile from his country because Saddam hated him. He wakes up one night and an ax-wielding group of men tried to hatchet him to death, or ax him to death. I guess you don't hatchet somebody with an ax. [*Laughter*] And you don't ax them with a hatchet. [*Laughter*] He wakes up, the glint of the blade coming at him, and he gets cut badly, escapes. The guy hit his wife, who never recovered, really. So he's seen what it means to be chased down and tried to kill by a tyrant. He—this guy believes that Iraq can and will be free.

See, step one is for there to be leadership. We need leadership in this world. We need people who believe in principles and are willing to stand on those principles and lead.

More and more Iraqis are now stepping up to defend their country against these killers, and that's what's going to happen. They got the choice to make: Do they want to be a free society, or do they want to be a society where mothers and dads cannot raise their children in a hopeful world. We believe—I believe—that moms and dads all over the world want to raise their children in peace and hope. That's what Americans believe. And therefore, it's important for us to stay side by side with these Iraqis as they assume more responsibility to bring freedom to their country.

And a free Iraq and a free Afghanistan is a big step toward making the world more peaceful. See, all this action that's taken is to do two things: One, to defend ourselves, is to deal with the realities of the 21st century, is not turn a blind eye to the lessons of September the 11th; and to bring peace. I want these little kids in this audience in this hall to be growing up and going to col-

lege in a peaceful world. We got hard work to do, but peace is possible.

A couple of points I want to share with you about my philosophy. We'll work with allies and friends. Remember, we got 60 nations involved in what they call the Proliferation Security Initiative. That's to help interdict weapons of mass destruction and technologies and equipment. We got nearly 40 in Afghanistan, nearly 30 in Iraq. But I'm not going to turn over national security decisions of this country to leaders of other countries.

One other thing I want to assure you is that when we put our troops into harm's way, they'll have the support of this Government. I want to thank our troops who are here. I want to thank the families of the troops who are here. Let me tell you something, I understand that these deployments are hard on the wives and husbands and moms and dads and sons and daughters. I know that. And the very least we can do is to make sure your loved ones have got the best pay, the best training, that you've got the best possible housing, the best equipment.

That's why I sent up to Congress a supplemental calling for \$87 billion extra money last September to help our troops. And we got great response. This was for equipment and spare parts, fuel, all the elements necessary to make sure our people have got their missions. We got good support. Only 12 Senators voted against it. That's all. And two of them are the guy I'm running against and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. Two of them were Kerry and Edwards. And you know, that's—my attitude is, is that when you put your troops in harm's way, they deserve the best. They said, you know—he said, "I voted for the \$87 billion, right before I voted against it." That's not a good enough explanation, I know, for the people of the Panhandle. And then he said it was a complicated matter. Listen, there is nothing complicated about making sure our troops have got the best. And that's what I'll continue to do as the Commander in Chief.

No, I'm running because I want to spread freedom and peace. We have an obligation

in this country to lead toward a more peaceful world. And we believe that freedom is the pathway to peace. We also believe this, that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

Let me talk real quick about how to make America stronger. That starts with making sure people can find work. And we want our people working. We want people to be able to do their duties as moms and dads by putting food on the table. We've been through a lot in this economy, if you really think about it. In 3½ years we've been through a recession and then that terror attack; we had some corporate scandals; marching to war in order to liberate Iraq and to make this country more secure. All that was hard on our economy.

And yet, we're growing. And the economy is—the growth rate to the economy—they're good. They're as good as they've been in nearly 20 years. People are working here in Florida. I think your unemployment rate is 4.7 percent. Yes. Jeb said it's because of him. [Laughter] I'll give credit where credit is due—and those entrepreneurs and farmers and workers of America. That's why we're doing well.

The tax cuts helped. They helped people. The—people say, "Well, that's great, but don't rest on your laurels." That's what Mother always said. She obviously said it outside the Oval Office. [Laughter] She's right. What more are you going to do? I'll tell you what more we're going to do. We're going to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit stays strong by keeping taxes on small businesses low. Most people—most small businesses in America pay tax at the individual income tax rate—that's a fact—by far the vast majority. If you're a small business, you're likely to be a sole proprietorship or a Subchapter S corporation, which means, when your taxes—your tax liability is due, you look at the individual tax tables. So when we reduce taxes on individuals, you're really providing extra capital for small businesses. And since by far the vast majority of new jobs are created by small businesses, it makes sense to stimulate the small-business sector of our economy. And that's what's happening in America today. People are growing.

Now, there's some things we've got to do to make sure the economy stays strong. You hear a lot of talk about jobs in America. All of us want jobs to stay here in America. The best way to keep jobs in America is for America to be the best place to do business in the world. Now, what does that mean? I'll tell you what it means. It means we need an energy policy to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy. If we want to keep jobs here, we've got to conserve better, we've got to work on renewables, and we've got to explore for environmentally friendly ways, in particular, in places like ANWR in Alaska. You know, there's 17 million acres up there, and all they're asking to do is explore on 2,000 of the 17 million, which, had we done this nearly a decade ago, we'd have an additional million barrels of oil—of U.S. oil helping to fuel our economy.

In order to make sure this economy of ours is strong, we've got to reject this notion of economic isolationism. We can't isolate ourselves from the world. We've got to be confident about our abilities to produce. You know, what has happened in the past is most Presidents have said let's open up our markets for foreign goods. And that's good for you as consumers, by the way. If you've got more goods from which you can choose, you're going to get a better price at better quality. That's how the marketplace works.

But the problem is other countries haven't treated us like we've treated them. And so the best policy is to open up their markets, not close ours, open up their markets so Florida entrepreneurs and manufacturers and farmers can sell their products. Free and fair trade will help keep this economy growing.

You know what else we need? We need to worry about the high cost of health care. If you're a small-business owner, you're worried about health care costs. We're helping in health care. We've increased the number of community health centers. Those are for low-income Americans. We want people getting their primary care at community health centers, not at emergency rooms. We've opened up SCHIP. We've strengthened Medicare.

There's some other things we need to do. Small businesses need to be able to pool risk just like big businesses do, so they can be

able to afford health insurance for their employees. And we need to expand health savings accounts. Health savings accounts are a tax-free policy which enables people to buy better health insurance at a lower cost and maintains the patient-doctor relationship as the core decisionmaking entity of health care.

And finally, in order to keep jobs here, in order to make sure our businesses are competitive places, we need medical liability reform. These junk lawsuits are driving out doctors and running up the cost of health care. This is a big issue in this campaign. It's a big issue in the State of Florida. It's a big issue all over the country. You cannot be pro-patient and pro-doctor and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. *[Laughter]* I made my choice: I am strongly in favor of medical liability reform—now.

We need tort reform. We need tort reform in this country if we expect people to be able to find jobs here. And we need an education system which works. And that's what we're going to talk a little bit about here. We've got some people who benefited from an interesting way they use our schools. By the way, good education first starts with starting early. And it did my heart good to drive down the highway and see, "This is an A-plus school." This is an A-plus school here. *[Applause]* Yes, that's good. But you know what, you wouldn't have known it if you didn't measure. Yes. Otherwise you would have been guessing, right? "We think it's an A-plus school." *[Laughter]* "It might be an A-plus school. We hope it's an A-plus school." That's not what the sign said. The sign said, "This is an A-plus school," because—*[applause]*.

All right, keep it that way. You know how we know and how you know in Florida—because you got a Governor who said, "Let's measure." And that's the whole crux of the No Child Left Behind Act. The No Child Left Behind Act says we're going to increase Federal spending for public schools—up 49 percent, by the way, since I took office.

But in return for increased funding, we said, "Now why don't you show us whether or not the children can read." That didn't seem like that tough of a request. Some peo-

ple call that an unfunded mandate. I call that an obligation of schools. To be able to teach a child to read is fundamental to learning. And so now we're measuring. And if we find out early a child can't get there, to grade-level by the third grade, that bill enables people to get extra help early, before it's too late.

So one way to make sure we got jobs here is to start this process of making sure every child can read—no child is left behind—and then as they head into high school, is to elevate our science and math, is to make sure the high school diploma means something; and then make sure when they get out of high school, there's an opportunity to go to college. I want you know that during my administration we've increased the number of children who received Pell grants by one million—one million additional children. So they have a chance to go to college. The loans are up. I mean, we're trying to help people go to college.

But also it's important—is to make sure our community college system is vibrant. And that's why we've had this assembly here, because I want to tell you how important I think community colleges are to a country which is hopeful and stronger and better. First, I want the community colleges to be relevant for our kids, and they are for a lot of kids. A lot of people use the community college system as a way to gain the skills necessary to fill a job. But we've got a lot of older Americans who need help too, going to the community colleges.

I'm going to tell you what's happening. This job base is changing, and that makes people nervous. And I can understand that. But my job isn't to be nervous; my job is to act. My job is to figure out how to solve problems. And when the job base is changing, it says we've got a problem. And the best way to solve that problem is to make funds available for the community college system so people can be trained for the jobs which actually exist. In other words, the job base changes, there are jobs available, but sometimes the skill set doesn't meet the jobs, the skill set required by the jobs.

And that's what we're going to talk about. Jill White is with us today. She is a—where are you? Where is Jill? Stand up. Thank you, Jill. She is—*[applause]*—she brought all her

second cousins over. *[Laughter]* Thanks for coming, Jill. Tell us what you do.

Dr. White. I'm the Vice President for Instructional Services here at Okaloosa-Walton College.

The President. Which means?

Dr. White. Which means the academic programs and registration, faculty, all the student issues live in my office.

The President. Yes, good. Well, kind of the enforcer. *[Laughter]* And so one of the things I want you to describe to people is how a displaced worker can access your college. I mean, you see—I presume you see people that are, like, your age and my age—not that old, I'm sure—my case. *[Laughter]* Tell me—seriously, tell me kind of the nature of the student body here.

[Dr. White made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, good. So you take all comers.

Dr. White. You betcha.

The President. See, community colleges are accessible; they're available; they're affordable; and their curriculums don't get stuck. In other words, if there's a need for a certain kind of worker, I presume your curriculums evolved over time.

Dr. White. You betcha. If this community needs—

The President. See, I'm not even a lawyer, and here I am leading the witness. *[Laughter]* Go ahead.

Dr. White. You betcha. If this community needs it, we're there to do that. We've partnered with businesses. We do retraining. We welcome short-term projects, 2-year degrees. We're even opening some bachelor's degree programs that are workforce-oriented to respond to this military and defense-oriented community.

The President. Yes, see, there are jobs in this community, and sometimes the skill sets of the workers don't meet the skill sets required for the job. And so what she's saying is the community college is available to train people for the jobs which actually exist.

I appreciate that. Thank you, Jill. Very good job.

Dr. White. You're welcome.

The President. Okay, we've got Wayne Campbell with us. Let me tell you something

interesting. He is the CEO—that's the chief executive officer—of Fort Walton Beach Medical Center. *[Applause]* Huge, thunderous ovation. Look—never mind, don't get carried away.

Are you looking for workers?

[Mr. Campbell made brief remarks.]

The President. And what kind of workers?

Mr. Campbell. I'd have to say all, but primarily nursing.

The President. Yes, so you've got a nursing shortage?

Mr. Campbell. Nationwide, there's a nursing shortage.

The President. Right. And obviously nurses require a certain skill set. What do you do to help people that you're trying to hire have the skill set necessary to fill the jobs?

[Mr. Campbell made further remarks.]

The President. That's good, yes, but they partnered with the school. See, here is what you're hearing. Here is a guy looking for work; there is health care jobs. If you're out there and listening to whether or not there's a job available for you, they're looking for workers. They're looking for nurses. They're looking for people in the health care field. That's just one area where there's a job shortage here in America.

And what he just said was they came to this community college to partner with the community college. The community college was openminded enough to say to a local employer, how can we work together in a collaborative fashion to educate people for the jobs which actually exist? One way to keep jobs in America is to utilize the community college system of America to make sure people have the skills necessary to fill the jobs that are growing here in this country.

And I want to thank you for coming. I appreciate you being here.

Tammy Ford is with us. She used to work in a textile company—for how long?

Ms. Ford. Fourteen years.

The President. What happened?

Ms. Ford. They shut down, took it to Mexico.

The President. See, the textile company went to Mexico. Then what happened?

Ms. Ford. I didn't have a job anymore.

The President. I know that. *[Laughter]*

[Ms. Ford made brief remarks.]

The President. Yes, let me tell you what she just said. Good job. Thank you. Very good. I knew you were going to do great. She got laid off. Her life was—it was a traumatic moment in her life. Fortunately, the Government has got plans to help. It's called trade adjustment assistance, which means if you get laid off—in this case, because the job went elsewhere—there's money to help you retrain. It's important for everybody to know here. That's wise use of taxpayers' money, by the way, is to help people retrain for the jobs which exist.

Now, we can't—the Government can't pass a law that says, "Tammy, you've got to go back to school." She had to make up her mind to do that herself. But Government has got a role to help people who want to help themselves. And that's what you're hearing. You're hearing a story about somebody who chose to go back to school with Government help. But listen to what she said. She said with extra education, she makes more money. In other words, she became a more productive worker. And when you hear productivity increases, that means there's a chance you can make more money. Not everybody—unless their skills—unless they go back to school. And the Government's role is to help you. That's what I'm telling you.

This is a robust plan to help people like Tammy gain the skills necessary to fill the higher-paying jobs which are being created. And it's one of the real challenges of this economy. And we've got to be wise about how we use our resources. And I can't think of a wiser way than to help people go back to the community colleges to train for the jobs which exist.

Marina Hobson is with us. You ready, Marina? Tell us your story real quick.

[Ms. Hobson made brief remarks.]

The President. See, let me just say that there are people out there probably listening, say, "Gosh, I wonder if I could do this?" And the answer is, of course you can. You just heard her. She said it's exciting to learn new things. Go ahead.

Ms. Hobson. And I graduated in 2001 with honors here, in our A-plus school—*[applause]*.

The President. There you go.

Ms. Hobson. And after I graduated, I worked for the Chamber of Commerce in Crestview for 3 years, and now I just recently changed jobs. I now work for a small tree service company called Fritz Brothers Tree Service.

The President. Fantastic.

Ms. Hobson. The number one tree service in—*[laughter]*.

The President. There you go; you just got a raise. Go ahead—making a little more money now than you did before?

Ms. Hobson. Oh, most definitely—most definitely.

The President. See, education pays off. It pays off when people take education seriously early in life. But the key is not to give up on anybody in America if we want this country to be a vibrant place, a chance where people can realize their dreams. Both these examples are examples of people that at one time their life was shattered because the jobs—just couldn't compete, yet new jobs are available. And we just got to help people get them.

Thanks for coming, Tammy—Marina. Thank you, appreciate you coming.

I'm running because I want this country to be a hopeful place. I'm running because I want to keep economic growth alive and well. I'm running so people can realize their dreams. One way to make sure this economy stays strong is to be wise about how we spend your money and keep taxes low, which is what I'm going to do.

And finally, I'm running again because I understand the strength of this country is the heart and soul of our people. That's the strength of America. I mean, think about it. This is a country that has got—people from all walks of life are willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. The ability to change our country one heart and one soul at a time is real because there are people who are willing to love a neighbor.

And my job as the President is to call upon that compassion, is to rally the great strength of the country. Government is limited in its

ability to love. Government is not a very loving organization. Government is about law and justice. Love comes from the soul of people. Love comes from their hearts. And the job of a President—part of the job of a President is to rally that compassion and call upon people to serve.

And that's why this Faith-Based and Community-Based Initiative is so important. It's an initiative that recognizes that sometimes only problems—problems can be solved when you help change a person's heart. If you're hooked on drugs or alcohol, sometimes a counselor can work it for you, but a lot of times it requires a change of your heart in order to change your behavior. And Government should not fear programs like that, programs based upon faith. They ought to welcome programs based upon faith to change this soul, one heart and one conscience at a time.

I'm running for a reason. There's more to do to make this country a safer country, a stronger country, and a better country. And I want thank you for giving me the chance to come and explain to you why I'm running again. And thank you for giving me a chance to ask for your help.

Now, before we get on the bus heading up to Panama City, I'll be glad to answer some questions if somebody has one or two.

Q. Right here, Mr. President! [Laughter]

The President. Whew. I'm glad that turned out to be a question. [Laughter] Let her go. What do you got? Yell it.

Q. It's an honor to be here.

The President. Thank you.

Q. You're the man for the job in this time.

The President. Thank you.

Tax Reform

Q. [Inaudible]—I want you to take up, and it's to make the world—that's H.R. 25—[inaudible].

The President. All right, thank you. He's talking about getting rid of the current tax system and replacing it with a national sales tax. It's an interesting idea. You know, I'm not exactly sure how big the national sales tax is going to have to be, but it's the kind of interesting idea that we ought to explore seriously. You know, we're working to try to simplify the Code. It is, no question, com-

plex. The more simple it is, the better it is for the American people. That's certainly one idea. That's an interesting idea that we ought to explore. And the Senator and I—we'll grill old Miller here on the bus to see if he can explain it all to us. [Laughter]

Yes, you got a question?

Q. Why do kids my age have to pay taxes?

The President. Why do kids your age have to pay taxes? That's an interesting question. I guess because you're earning money, to begin with. [Laughter] I don't know what your circumstances are. I will tell you some principles I believe. I don't believe anybody ought to pay more than 35 percent to the Federal Government, for starters. I believe that if we set priorities in Washington, we don't need to be raising taxes on the people right now. I think we can keep taxes low in order to make sure this economy continues to grow.

I'll tell you what I'm worried about. I'm worried about if we don't make permanent the child credit—if we don't, the child credit goes down, which will hurt families with children. If we don't make this tax relief permanent we passed, the marriage penalty is going up. If we don't, the 10-percent bracket goes away. In other words, we're raising taxes on the working people right now, which is the wrong time to raising taxes on the working people.

Yes, sir.

2004 Campaign/Support for the President

Q. I have two things to say for you. One is, if you would use more testimonials in your campaign from military people, that would prove to the American people that the Army is behind you and they're being accepted where they are and they're doing the job that they do.

The President. Good idea. Thank you. And not only that, I got that advice for free. Here I'm paying thousands of dollars to these high-paid political consultants, and this guy comes up with a good idea for free.

Q. And the other thing is, is I'm 60 years old, and I've voted Republican from the very first time I could vote. And I also want to say this is the very first time that I have felt that God was in the White House.

The President. Thank you. [Applause] Thank you all. Thank you all. Let me ask you a question. Do you like Jeb? Jeb plants him right here on the front row. [Laughter] Yes, go ahead.

Constitutional Amendment on Marriage

Q. Mr. President, how do you feel about the Republic standing strong in these current times on a constitutional amendment that has been burdening our Nation?

The President. Be a little more specific.

Q. Well, specifically, like one man and one woman getting married—

The President. Yes, okay. He's asking me about—I think you're asking me about why I proposed a constitutional amendment to support traditional marriage. Is that right?

Q. Well, how you feel about it.

The President. Well, I support it, and I'll tell you why.

Q. Yes, sir, constitutional cleansing for things that have burdened our Nation that should be under the cover of the Republic instead of the courts.

The President. Yes, that's a good question. See, yes, what he wants to know is—he's worried that the courts are defining the issue of marriage. That's what he's asking. And so am I. I believe that—first of all, I just want everybody to take a step back from this issue, and this is an issue where all of us need to treat people with different opinions with the utmost respect. This is a sensitive topic. The debate needs to be conducted in a civilized way. But it's a serious debate.

I'll tell you why it's a serious debate. I happen to believe traditional marriage, marriage between a woman and man, is necessary for a stable society. It's served civilization well throughout the years. Now, people say, "Why the constitutional amendment?" And the reason why is, is because I am concerned that law on the books will be overturned by the courts. The courts have been very active in this area. As a matter of fact, in one State they redefined—four judges redefined marriage as we know it—four judges—and the people didn't have a decision in that process.

And I am concerned that that will continue to happen on Federal law as well. And someday we're going to wake up and realize that

the courts have defined marriage, and not the people. And so one way to guarantee that the people are involved with this very important debate is through the constitutional process. After all, States must be involved in the ratification of a constitutional amendment.

And so I support a constitutional amendment to define marriage as between a man and a woman. I also believe the States have got the right, should they choose, to provide legal guarantees for other types of couples. To me, that is a different issue from the definition of marriage. And so that's why I take the position I took. And I appreciate your question.

Yes, sir.

Possibility of Military Draft/Support for Troops

Q. President Bush—

The President. Yes, ma'am.

Q. I understand that the Democratic leadership in Congress wants—

The President. I'm looking around for you.

Q. I'm here. I'm over here.

The President. No, not for you. [Laughter] Oh, okay. I got you, yes. Thank you.

Q. I understand that the Democratic leadership in Congress wants to reinstate the draft that will include women with no exception. What is your position—

The President. No, I don't think so. I haven't heard that, to be fair to the Democrat leadership. Maybe they have. I don't think I've heard it. John hasn't, either. No, we're not going—we don't need the draft. Look, the All-Volunteer Army is working. The All-Volunteer Army—I really don't think, in all fairness, I haven't heard that. Maybe you have. I have not heard any leader in the Congress of either party advocating a draft. I beg your pardon—John said a couple of the guys in the House have. They will—I know Senator McCain and I agree on this issue for certain: The All-Volunteer Army works.

And the way—I'll tell you one way how you make it work—I just signed a defense appropriations bill, which is the fourth year in a row in which we've raised the pay of those who wear our uniform. And the pay's

getting better. And the housing is getting better. In other words, the quality of life issues are improving. And that's one way you make—that's how you make the All-Volunteer Army work, by making sure that when somebody signs up, they're treated well, that they're paid well, and that they're housed well and that—the best way to encourage reenlistment is to make sure that the families feel welcomed and well-treated.

I'm really proud of our military. You know, one of the hard things I've got to do—[*ap- plause*—let me finish here—one of the hard things that I've got to do, and I know John does it as well, and I'm sure the Congressman does, is to visit the wounded. We did so in Fort Lewis, Washington, together. And I can tell you that your Government provides fantastic medical service to those who have been wounded on the battlefield. I mean, we're taking these kids from Iraq to either a hospital in Germany or a field hospital and then to Walter Reed or Bethesda Naval Hospital in record time. And we're saving a lot of lives.

And the question I always ask their loved ones is, "Are you being treated well?" You've got a wife there that is worried about her husband who has been wounded, and I say, "Are they treating you well? Is your loved one getting the care needed?" And, to a person—now, look, I, admittedly—sometimes it's hard to tell me a different thing than, "Yes, we're doing great." But it's—but the response from those whose lives we're trying to heal and save and their loved ones has been unbelievable.

I mean, your Government cares deeply about somebody who is in harm's way and who has been injured in harm's way. And that is—you've got to know something, as the Commander in Chief it means a lot to be able to tell a relative, "We're doing all we can to help your loved one." And we are. And we're a great country. We really are. What a fabulous nation we are.

Go ahead and yell it out.

Q. First of all—[*inaudible*].

The President. Thank you. Yes, I better give you a mike for that one.

U.S. Mission in Iraq

Q. [*Inaudible*—I have a brother who served in Afghanistan and is going back to Iraq—[*inaudible*].

The President. Right.

Q. [*Inaudible*—people from around the world, but my concern is how, in Iraq, they have so many hands in the pot. I want—[*inaudible*].

The President. Yes, thanks. That's a very interesting question. Really—your son's going back to Iraq?

Q. My brother.

The President. Brother. And what she's worried about is whether or not we've got the vision and a plan to complete the vision—to complete the mission. That's a very legitimate question. And the answer is, we do. We do.

I'll tell you, the—first, let me talk to you about my plans for your brother. When he gets over there, I'd like him to come back as soon as possible, but that's after the mission has been completed. All of us want our troops out, but what we don't want is to cut short the mission. We don't want politics to decide the mission. We want—I think the best solution is to put good commanders on the ground, say, "What do you need?"

And so, people—what is the mission? The mission is a free Iraq that can stand up and defend herself. That is going to change the world. I just want you to know that your brother is going on a mission that has got historic proportions to it. I mean, this is a—we're changing history. Just think about what a free Iraq will mean in the heart of the Middle East. It's not only going to make America more secure; it's going to help change a part of the world that is desperate for freedom. People long to be free.

Too often, our foreign policy has been, "Let's just don't worry about the freedom aspect of society." But look where it got us. Think about it. In that part of the world, there's such resentment and poverty, and we've got kids looking for work and they can't find anything, so they become recruited by these killers. And yet, there's an opportunity to change that, by working for a free society.

And so the mission of your brother is clear. And the mission will be better accomplished

and more quickly accomplished when we train Iraqis to do the job that our coalition forces are doing now. And that's the task at hand. That's the task at hand. The task at hand is to train these folks and equip these folks as quickly as possible and as efficiently as possible.

I mean, the key is not to set artificial timelines. See, you set an artificial timeline, it says to the enemy, "Well, gosh, all we've got to do is wait them out." It says to the Iraqis, "We're going to quit on you." If the Iraqi people think that the United States is not true to its word, they will grow timid. They don't want to take a risk, in case somebody comes back that's going to cut off their hands.

And so your brother is going on a mission that is a vital mission. I know you're worried about him. I can see it in your eyes. And I don't blame you.

Q. He's ready.

The President. Well, he's ready, but sister, you're worried, and I don't blame you. You love him, is why you're worried. And that's wonderful.

Let me tell you an interesting story, though, and I hope you keep this story—I hope this helps you and helps everybody understand. So I'm having dinner with Prime Minister Koizumi. He's the Prime Minister of Japan. And we're having Kobe beef—pretty good. [Laughter] It was in Tokyo. And guess what we were talking about? We were talking about peace. We were talking about how to deal with Kim Chong-il in North Korea. He's dangerous. I thought it didn't make any sense for us to have a bilateral relationship with him because he—the last time we tried to have one, he didn't tell the truth. So I learned a lesson and then started to rally other nations to be involved with us to convince this man to get rid of his nuclear weapons program. And one of our partners in convincing Kim Chong-il to disarm is Japan.

Now, the interesting part of the story, I think, as far as your brother is concerned, is that during the course of the conversation, I thought it was pretty neat to be talking to a Prime Minister of a country that we had been at war with, that my dad had actually, as a young Navy pilot, trained down the road here, went overseas—and I know many of

your dads did as well—to fight against the Japanese, our enemy. They were our sworn enemy. And today—or that day, I was talking to the head of a former enemy, and we're talking about keeping the world more peaceful. [Applause]

Now, let me finish—let me finish. There were a lot of people after World War II who did not believe that Japan could be a self-governing, peaceful nation. There were a lot of people who said, "Well, the reconstruction effort isn't going to work. These people can't do this." But fortunately, our predecessors in the Presidency and the Senate and the Congress believed that liberty can change lives and never forgot that fantastic American belief that freedom has the capacity to transform lives, transform enemies to allies in peace. Some day an American President is going to be sitting down with an elected leader from Iraq, huddled and talking about how to keep the peace. That's what your brother—[applause].

Go ahead, yes.

Support for the President

Q. My dad is a retired vet—[inaudible].

The President. Thank you so much. Where is he? Where's the colonel?

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. Well, you tell the colonel I saluted him. Thank you. I appreciate that. God bless you. Thank you. That's very sweet of you.

Okay, who was yelling up there? You? Okay, fine. Are you the spokesman for the rowdy bunch up there?

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay, well, good.

Q. Okay, first of all, I want to say that I love you.

The President. Thank you.

Q. And I would like to see you in office for 4 more years.

The President. Thank you. Are you registered to vote?

Q. No.

The President. See, you get to ask a question; I get to ask one. Are you registered?

Q. No, not yet. And—

The President. Are you 18?

Q. No, and I don't want to talk about it because it upsets me. [Laughter]

The President. Okay, good. That's a teenager—I'm used to that. [Laughter] I've been there. [Laughter]

International Criminal Court

Q. My question is, why did you let the International Court try our troops?

The President. Yes, I haven't. I'm against the International Court. That's a pretty darn sophisticated question. I didn't join the International Criminal Court because I don't want to put our troops in the hands of prosecutors from other nations. Look, if somebody has done some wrong in our military, we'll take care of it. We got plenty of capability of dealing with justice.

Very good question. Make sure you register.

Yes, ma'am. Anybody about ready to fall out? [Laughter] Getting a little hot? Okay, I get the message.

Q. Mr. President.

The President. Yes, ma'am.

Message to Children/Homeland Security

Q. I am the attorney for the Guardian Ad Litem Program here in our area. And we advocate for the best interest of children. And I know that you have a heart for our children.

The President. Right.

Q. And I would like to ask if you could address our children and even the young adults who are here and tell them something that you want—that you think is important about your past 4 years and your next 4 years—

The President. Thanks, yes.

Q. —about their safety in this country.

The President. Yes, I appreciate that. First, my message to the children is, make right choices in life. Understand that the decisions you make as a youngster can affect you. My second message is, love your parents. My third message is—seriously. My third message is, take advantage of your schooling opportunities. It's really important to learn early in life. They're—hold up a second. [Laughter]

You're growing up in a different time. It's probably hard for you to realize it because you don't realize what it was like, for example, to grow up in the fifties. [Laughter] McCain and I grew up in the fifties. It was

a different time. It used to be when we were younger, oceans would protect us. And we were in a pretty unique position here in America where we could say, gosh, there could be a threat gathering over there, but we didn't have to worry about it.

And that's what happened on September the 11th. I hope you just understand this, that this is a demarcation point in history, the history of our country, because it changed the whole way that we've got to look at our own security. It meant that if there is a threat somewhere, we can no longer not expect it to come here. And that's what you've got to understand. This is a different time. That's why you hear a lot of talk from those of us in office about securing the homeland. There wasn't a lot of talk about securing the homeland prior to September the 11th. We saw some terrorists threats. Nothing was done about them, hardly. But very few people really dreamt that somebody would take our own airplane and fly it into our own building and kill 3,000 people. No one—you ask any adult that you might run into, could you envision that, and the answer was no.

And so your question is—for the past 4 years what the kids have been learning is, is that the history of our Nation changed in a way that can create difficult circumstances for people, because our job is to try to tell the truth and to remind people that there's still danger. Believe me, a President—it would be much easier for a President if he could say, "There is no danger. Gosh, the world is peaceful, and everybody is doing great." But that's just not the hand we got dealt during this period of our history. So you will—what happened the last 4 years—she asked me to talk about the last 4 and the next 4—the last 4 you really began to see this country understanding and coming to grips with the nature of the world we live in.

I think the next 4 years what you'll see is, because we're willing to do hard work and stick to our word and take action when necessary—and we've had a lot of successes—the next 4 years will be more peace. I think you're going to see the world changing for peace. And you've got to understand one reason why, and that's because there are just some fundamental values in life that can

change societies, starting with the thing that we take for granted in America, which is freedom. Freedom is a—when societies become free societies and the people's aspirations are listened to and the leaders are responsive to the people, not to their own whims, those societies become hopeful societies, and the world becomes a more peaceful place. That's what you'll see over the next 4 years.

Last question, right here. This guy has a question—okay, two more questions. The people's choice will go last.

Yes, ma'am. What have you got?

President's Faith/Religious Freedom

Q. Mr. President, I was wondering if you were a Christian.

The President. I—yes, I am. Now, let me talk about religion. I want you all to hear me on religion right quick. It is very important for this country to honor religion this way: You can be religious or you can choose not to be religious, and you're equally American. You have a right in this country to worship freely. It is a fundamental right that must never change. And if you choose to worship the Almighty, you are equally American if you're a Christian, Jew, Muslim, or Hindu. That's the precious nature of how we view religion in this country. That freedom to worship and not be condemned because of the choice you make, by man, is a—it must be jealously guarded by any of us, Republican or Democrat or independent, who are honored with a public office. I can't tell you what a valuable part of our past, present, and future the freedom to worship as you see fit is. It's just an important part of our country, and it's not going to change.

Great question. Final question, sir—the people's choice. [Applause] Can you please explain why you have got such a huge entourage?

Charter Schools

Q. Here we go. Mr. President, OWC has a charter high school.

The President. Oh, yes.

Q. And this is the charter high school.

The President. Good job.

Q. The charter high school is number one in the State of Florida of all high schools. We are the "A."

The President. Now, how do you know that?

Q. Your test.

The President. Yes, thank you very much. He didn't guess, did he?

Q. What I want to know is, what is the security that we have of sharing our great experience with the rest of the country and also of keeping our charter high school and making it flourish and continue to flourish like it is?

The President. Good question. First of all, let me ask you something. How many of you all are going to college? [Applause] That's good. Good job. Secondly, high schools are chartered not by the Federal Government, and they will not be chartered by the Federal Government so long as I'm the President. That's called—that's not local control of schools. Schools need to be locally controlled. High schools are chartered by the State, and that's where they should be, by the county, by somebody other than the Federal Government. You don't want your Federal Government running the schools. No, believe me. And they're not going to.

And the question is, how do you know—I mean, how do you spread charter schools? I'll tell you how. You hold schools to account. And you put the scores out for everybody to see. And if, in fact, you're number one in the State, and I believe you are—you wouldn't have said it in front of the national cameras if you weren't. People say, "Why—why is this charter school number one?" That's how you begin to spread educational excellence—not from dictates from above but from excellence from below.

That's why the accountability systems that we're now developing at the State level, with kind of insistence from the Federal Government in return for extra money—that's why those accountability systems are so vital, so that a principal—I guess you're a principal—can stand up and say, "We're number one." The President says, "Well, how do I know?" And he says, "Because we measure." But as a result of an accountability system, it enables the best practices to emerge.

You're obviously doing something well. You've got great teachers, I'm confident, but you're using the right curriculum. You're using a great curriculum. And so somebody

will say, “Gosh, my charter school or my high school isn’t doing as good as my neighbor’s. I better figure out why.” That’s what the accountability system does. It creates an atmosphere where we’re raising that bar, we’re challenging what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. You know, when you lower the bar, guess what you get? You get lousy results. I suspect you’ve raised those standards, haven’t you? We’ll keep raising the bar.

Listen, I want to thank everybody for coming. We’re on to victory. Thanks for your help. God bless. I appreciate you coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Speaker-designate Allan Bense of the Florida House of Representatives; Bev Kilmer, candidate for Congress in Florida’s Second Congressional District; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab al Zarqawi; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Ayad al-Alawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Remarks in Panama City, Florida

August 10, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all for coming. Thank you all very much. So Little Brother says, “Why don’t you come to north Florida; maybe we can get come people to show up.” We are so honored so many came out to say hello. Thanks a lot. We really appreciate you being here. I’m here to ask for your vote. I’m here traveling—I’m traveling this part of your State to let the people of north Florida know there is more to do to make this country safer, stronger, and better. And I want your help.

I’m keeping fine company. I’m proud to be traveling with Senator John McCain. What a fantastic American he is. I’m glad Brother is here. He’s doing a great job for the people of Florida, and I’m proud to call him Brother. I know you’re proud to call him Governor.

I’m sorry Laura is not here. No, I know it. She’s a great wife and a wonderful mother, and she’s doing a heck of a job as the First Lady of this country. Today I’m going to give you some reasons to put me back into office, but perhaps the most important one of all

is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

And I’m proud of my runningmate. I admit he’s not the prettiest face in the race. [Laughter] But I didn’t pick him for his looks. I picked him because of his experience, his judgment. I picked him because he can do the job.

I’m proud my friend J.C. Watts is here, I appreciate you being here, J.C. I want to thank Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings and Attorney General Charlie Crist for joining us today. I’m proud to be on the stage with them. I want to thank the House Speaker-designate Allan Bense for being on the bus and traveling with us today. We’ve been traveling with Bev Kilmer as well. Put her in the House. She’ll be a great Member of the U.S. Congress.

I want to thank Aaron Tippin for being here. I want to thank all the grassroots activists. Those are the people who put up the signs, make the phone calls. Make sure you go out and register your friends and neighbors. See, we have a duty in this country to vote. We have an obligation in a free society to show up at the polls. Don’t be afraid of convincing discerning Democrats and wise independents to go to the polls as well. They know what good government is. They know strong leadership when they see it. They understand the world is going to be safer and stronger and better with 4 more years.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. In the past few years, we’ve been through a lot together, and we’ve accomplished a great deal together. But there’s only one reason to look backwards, and that is to determine who best to lead this Nation forward. I’m asking for your vote because so much is at stake. We have so much more to do to move this Nation forward. I want to be your President for 4 more years. From creating jobs to improving our schools, from fighting terror to spreading the peace, we made much progress, and there is more to do—and there is more to do.

We’ve got more to do to make our schools, our public schools, the centers of excellence we know they can be so no child is left behind in America. Listen, when we came to office 3½ years ago, too many of our children

were being shuffled from grade to grade, year after year, without learning the basics. So we're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're raising the bar. We believe in accountability. We believe in local control of schools. We believe in challenging the status quo when children are trapped in schools which will not teach and will not change. And we're making real progress. We're making real progress.

We've got more to do. I understand the jobs of the future will require greater knowledge and higher-level skills, so we're going to work to reform our high schools so a high school diploma means something. We'll expand science and math education so our young people can compete in a high-tech world. We'll expand the use of the Internet to bring high-level training in the classrooms. What I'm telling you is, after 4 more years, a rising generation will gain the skills and the competence necessary to realize the American Dream.

We've got more to do to make quality health care available and affordable. When we came to office, too many older Americans heard year after year after year the promise of prescription drugs for Medicare. We got the job done. More than 4 million seniors have signed up for drug discount cards that provide real savings. And in 2006, all seniors on Medicare will be able to choose a plan that fits their needs, and Medicare will give them coverage for prescription drugs.

We've done more, though, than that in health care. We've expanded community centers to help low-income Americans. We've created health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their own health care needs. But there's more to do. See, most Americans get their health care coverage through their work, yet many small businesses, which create the most new jobs in America, cannot afford health coverage. So you know what we need to do? We need to let our small businesses pool together, join together so they can purchase insurance at the discounts available to the big companies.

To improve health care, we must end the frivolous lawsuits that run up the cost of health care and run the doctors out of business. You cannot be pro-patient and pro-doctor and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You

have to choose. And my opponent has made his choice: He put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice: I am for medical liability reform now.

Listen, we're going to use technology to reduce cost and prevent health care mistakes. We'll do more to expand research to seek new cures. In all we do to improve health care in America, we will make sure the health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by Government bureaucrats.

We got more to do to make this economy stronger. We've been through a lot when it comes to our economy. We've been through a recession. We've been through scandals. We've been through the terror attack. And yet we've overcome these obstacles, because our workers are great, our small businesses are strong, our farmers are good at what they do. I also think we overcame these obstacles because of two well-timed tax cuts. We didn't pick winners or losers when it came to tax relief. We said if you're paying taxes, you ought to get relief. And we're helping American families with that tax relief. If you have a family with children, you get tax relief. If you married, you get tax relief. We've got a Tax Code that has a marriage penalty.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. We ought to be encouraging marriage in this country, not penalizing marriage.

And our tax relief helped small businesses. And this time, the check really was in the mail. [*Laughter*] Listen, because we acted, our economy since last summer has grown at a rate as fast as any in nearly 20 years. We've added over 1.5—nearly 1.5 million new jobs since last August. The national unemployment rate is 5.5 percent. Because we acted, Florida has added almost 300,000 new jobs since the end of 2001, and your unemployment rate is 4.7 percent. People in this State are working, and that's good for our country.

Listen, I'm not going to be satisfied until everybody who wants to work can find a job, and so there's more to do. To keep jobs in America, regulations must be reasonable and fair. To keep jobs in America, we must reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. To keep jobs in America, we need tort reform. To keep jobs in America, we will

not overspend your money, and we will keep your taxes low. To keep jobs in America, we will help our workers retrain, when necessary, at places like our community colleges. To keep jobs in America, we will level the playing field when it comes to trade. Listen, America can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as we're treated fairly.

What I'm telling you is, if you give me 4 more years, we will still be the leading economy in the world, our farm economy will be strong, more small businesses will exist, and Americans will be able to have better and higher-paying jobs.

We have more to do to wage and win the war against terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in the world. If America shows uncertainty and weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. That is not going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on that terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as a home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up terror cells around the world, including our own country. Because we acted, because we were resolute and firm, today Afghanistan is a rising democracy; Afghanistan is an ally on terror. Many young girls now go to school for the first time in Afghanistan, thanks to the United States and our coalition. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

Prior to September the 11th, Pakistan was a safe transit point for terrorists. Today, Pakistan is an ally in the war on terror, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Saudi Arabia was not paying attention to those who were raising money and recruiting and operating with little opposition. Today, the Saudi Government is taking the fight to Al Qaida. They're an ally in the war on terror. America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies sent a clear message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. Remember, he was firing weapons at American pilots enforcing the world's sanctions. He was a threat. He used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. Saddam Hussein murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world.

After September the 11th, we looked at all the threats in the world in a new light. One of the lessons of that fateful day, a lesson I will never forget as your President, is that we must take threats seriously, before they fully materialize. My administration saw a threat. We looked at intelligence; it further confirmed in our mind that Saddam Hussein was a threat. The United States Congress—Members of both political parties, including my opponent—looked at the same intelligence and came to the same conclusion: Saddam Hussein was a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at that intelligence and came to the conclusion that Saddam Hussein was a threat.

The United Nations Security Council then demanded a full accounting of his weapons and his weapons programs, or face serious consequences. As he had for over a decade, the tyrant refused to comply with the demands of the free world. As a matter of fact, he systematically deceived the inspectors that were in his country. And so I had a choice to make: Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust the actions and words of a madman, or take action to defend America? Given that choice, I will defend our country every time.

No, we didn't find the stockpiles we expected to find. Yet, he had the capability to make weapons of mass destruction, and he could have easily shared that capability with terrorist enemies. Knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action. America and the world are safer because Saddam sits in a prison cell.

Almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and almost 220 days after switching positions to declare himself the anti-war candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision

to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, Senator Kerry now agrees with me that even though we have not found the stockpile of weapons we believed were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I want to thank Senator Kerry for clearing that up. But be careful, there's still 84 days left in this campaign for him to change his mind.

Listen, I'm running for 4 more years because there's more work to do. We'll work with our friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. See, you can't talk sense to these people. You can't negotiate with these people. You cannot hope that they change. We will aggressively pursue them. We will engage them. We will defeat them so we do not have to face them here at home.

America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. See, we put together a strong coalition to help us. There's over 60 nations involved with the Proliferation Security Initiative. There are nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan. There are some 30 nations involved in Iraq. We thank their leaders, we thank their people for sacrificing for freedom and peace. We'll continue to build alliances and work with our friends. I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

In these crucial times, America's commitments are kept by the men and women who wear our uniform. I am really proud of our military, and I know you are as well. I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I have seen their decency and their unselfish courage. I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands.

And we have a duty in Government to make sure those who wear our uniform are fully supported by the Government. Last September, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in our missions. The legislation provided body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, spare parts,

fuel, health benefits, and ammunition. In the Senate, only a small, out-of-the-mainstream minority of 12 Senators voted against the legislation. Two of those twelve Senators are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. When asked about why he voted no to support our troops, he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." Now, I've spent some time here in north Florida; I understand that's not the way the people talk up here. They like people who say one thing and mean it. And then when pressed he said, well, he's proud of his vote, and then he said, well, the whole thing is a complicated matter. There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We will work to change the conditions that give rise to terror: poverty and hopelessness and resentment. See, a peaceful and free Iraq and a peaceful and free Afghanistan will be powerful examples in a neighborhood that is desperate for freedom. Free countries do not export terror. Free countries listen to the dreams and aspirations of their people. Afghanistan and Iraq have now got strong leaders who are committed to free societies. The people of those countries, having been brutalized by tyrants, are now beginning to step up and take responsibility. More Afghan citizens and more Iraqis are joining their militaries and police forces to secure their own country so it can be free.

See, by serving the ideal of liberty, we're bringing hope to others and that makes America more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're spreading peace. By serving the ideal of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of our Nation. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

Listen, we've got a lot of work to do, and I understand that. That's why I'm running for 4 more years. There are enemies who hate us, and they're still plotting to harm us. My opponent says that going to war with the terrorists is actually improving their recruiting efforts. His logic is upside-down. It shows a dangerous misunderstanding of the enemy

we face. See, during the nineties, the terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us, long before we went to war with them. They hate us. They don't need an excuse for their hatred. It was wrong to blame America for the anger and evil of the killers. We don't create terrorists by fighting back. We defeat terrorists by fighting back.

I agree with the conclusions of the 9/11 Commission when they said our homeland is safer, but we're not yet safe. We've got more to do. We'll secure this homeland by staying on the offense. We're going to do—to secure this homeland as well, by continuing to push for meaningful reform. Listen, we started the hard process. We transformed our defenses and created a Department of Homeland Security to better protect you. We passed the PATRIOT Act. The PATRIOT Act is necessary to give law enforcement the tools necessary to track down terrorists.

We're integrating intelligence and law enforcement better than ever before. We're taking action on a lot of the commission's recommendations. Today I name a good Floridian to head the Central Intelligence Agency. Congressman Porter Goss is my nominee before the United States Senate. We'll work together to strengthen that vital agency, so we have the intelligence necessary to better secure our homeland. I also will look forward to working with Congress to create the position of National Intelligence Director, so one person is in charge of coordinating all our intelligence, both overseas and domestic.

These reforms aren't going to be easy. They're never easy in Washington. There's a lot of entrenched interests there, people willing to defend the status quo. It's not enough to advocate reform, you have to be able to get it done. When it comes to improving our public schools, we got the job done. When it comes to improving health care for our senior citizens, we got the job done. When it comes to improving our economy and creating jobs, we're getting the job done. When it comes to better securing our homeland and spreading the peace, we're getting the job done. When it comes to electing a President, put somebody in office who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Listen, we live in exciting times—exciting times. But they're times of change. In order to help people through times of change, I think the Government ought to stand side by side with families and workers. One way to do that is promote an ownership society in America. See, we want people owning their own health care accounts, so if they change jobs their health care account goes with them. We want people to have more control over their lives. We want people being the decisionmakers when it comes to health care.

When it comes to our retirement accounts, listen, old guys like me and McCain are in pretty good shape when it comes to Social Security. But if you're a younger worker, there is doubt as to whether or not Social Security is fiscally sound enough to—for you. That's why I think younger workers need personal savings accounts, so they can take them from job to job and pass them on to people they want to pass them on to.

In a changing world, I think it's a positive sign to know more people own their own home. Homeownership rates are at an all-time high in America. I love the fact when a new homebuyer can open the door and say, "Welcome to my house. This is my home." We want more people owning their own business. There's nothing better, when you say you own something in America. If you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of this country.

In a world that changes, some things that are not going to change, our belief in liberty, in opportunity, in the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity. The individual values we try to live by won't change, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity; our belief in institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. We stand for institutions like marriage and families, which are the foundation of our society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. Listen, this culture of ours is beginning to change from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you are responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved yourself.

I understand the strength of this country is in the hearts and souls of our citizens. I'm running for 4 more years to continue to rally the armies of compassion so that we can help and heal and change America, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. It's a time we need firm resolve and clear vision. None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I will never forget. I remember the guys in hardhats screaming at me, "Whatever it takes." I remember working the ropeline and looking in the eyes of a man who had just come out of the rubble searching for a buddy. He said, "Do not let me down."

He took that day personally. All the people at that site took it personally. You took it personally, and I took it personally. I have a duty that goes on. I wake up every day trying to figure out how best to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

We've come through a lot. We've come through a lot together. We've done a lot of hard work. We're moving our country forward. During the next 4 years, we will spread opportunity and ownership through every corner of this country. During the next 4

years, we'll pass the enduring values of our Nation to another generation. During the next 4 years, we will lead the cause of freedom and peace, and we will prevail.

Four years ago, I traveled this great State and this great country asking for the vote, and I made a pledge to my fellow Americans, if you honored me with this great responsibility, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, we will carry Florida, we will carry America, and I will continue—I will continue to honor my high office.

God bless you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the Panama City Marina. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush, Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings, and State Attorney General Charlie Crist of Florida; former Representative J.C. Watts, Jr., of Oklahoma; Speaker-designate Allan Bense of the Florida House of Representatives; Bev Kilmer, candidate for Congress in Florida's Second Congressional District; country music entertainer Aaron Tippin; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya.

Remarks in a Discussion at Eclipse Aviation in Albuquerque, New Mexico

August 11, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thanks for coming. I'm glad you all are here. Thank you all for coming. It's good to be back. Please be seated. Yes, thanks for being here today. It's good to be back—

Audience member. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes. [Laughter] It's good to be back in country where people wear cowboy hats.

Thanks for your hospitality. I'm traveling our country asking for the vote. I think you have to go out and ask people for their help and ask people for their support. I've got a reason for running again—I'm going to share some of that with you today. We're going to do it in a little different way. We're going to talk about small businesses. We'll talk about homeownership. We're going to talk about jobs and education, all aimed to let the people know that I have a desire to make

sure this country is a stronger country and a better country for everybody—*por todos*.

I want to thank my friend Pete Domenici. You got a good one in Pete Domenici. He's a United States Senator—he's a strong leader for New Mexico. When you're with Pete, all he talks about is New Mexico—[*laughter*]—occasionally works in the United States. [*Laughter*] He loves this State, ever since he was a fire-balling righthander. [*Laughter*] He's a wonderful man. I'm proud you're here, Pete. Thanks for taking on a leadership role in my campaign.

I'm also proud to be traveling with John McCain. Nothing better than waking up in the country and getting a cup of coffee and getting in the pickup truck and driving around and looking at the cows. That's what John and I did this morning. It's a good way to clear your mind and keep your perspective.

Yesterday, we were in the Panhandle of Florida. We ended our day in Panama City, Florida. There was 22,000 people that came out to say hello. It's—listen, I'm going to tell you what I'm seeing. I'm seeing big crowds; the enthusiasm is high. We're on our way to victory.

There's two people I wish who were here who aren't. One is Heather Wilson. I know she's out working. She's a fantastic lady. You need to put her back in Congress. People of this district are lucky that Heather is your Congresswoman. She's very competent, very smart, very able person who has got a lot of respect—who has earned a lot of respect in Washington.

And the other person who I regret is not here is Laura. [*Applause*] Yes, you do too. You know, she was born and raised right around the corner. I was raised right around the corner; she was born and raised right around the corner. We're right on the other side of the New Mexico border. We've spent a lot of time in this State. This is a State where we don't have to have a tour guide to figure out how to get around. And we don't need to have somebody explain to us how the people of New Mexico think. She's a great First Lady, a great mother, and a wonderful wife. And she sends her best to Pete and all our friends here in New Mexico.

I also want to thank the sheriff—the high sheriff is here, Darren White. It's good to see you, Sheriff. I appreciate you being here. He's sitting next to my friend John Sanchez. John, thanks for taking a leadership role. I want to thank Pat Lyons and Manny Lujan, friends of mine. I appreciate so very much Allen Weh, the chairman of this—the chairman of the party.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. [*Applause*] Yes, there you go. You're the people who are going to get people registered to vote. That's what we're really here to talk about in many ways, is to get people to show up to the polls. I'm confident if we can get a lot of people to vote, we'll carry New Mexico this time—wasn't but about 300 votes last time. [*Laughter*] Too many of our people got the head cold right before the election. This time, we're going to get them out to vote. And I want your help. And remember, there are a lot of Democrats here who like what's going on in Washington, DC—make sure you get those people to the polls. Make sure you get the independents. They understand that this administration is dedicated to keep this country safer and stronger and a better country for everybody.

I met Tom Hesch today. Where are you, Tom? There he is, right there. He's a doc; he's a dentist. Guess what he does? He provides free dental care for people who need help; that's what he does. One of the reasons—I call him a soldier in the army of compassion. You know why I mention Tom, is because the strength of this country is the hearts and souls of citizens like Tom who are willing to reach out to somebody who needs help and says, "Can I help you, brother or sister? What can I do to help your life?" I'm running for 4 more years because I want to continue to rally and encourage the soldiers in that vast army of compassion, so that America can change one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

I understand the limitations of Government. I understand that Government is not a loving organization. [*Laughter*] But Government can stand side by side with loving organizations to help improve the lives of people from all walks of life.

Tom, I want to thank you for being here. Thank you for the example you set.

I'm also running because I want this country of ours to be a stronger country, and by that I mean a country in which people can realize their dreams. And people can better realize their dreams when our economy is strong. Now, we've been through a lot. We've been through a lot in this country. If you really think about what we've been through, it's amazing to say that we're strong and getting stronger. We've been through a recession; that's when things are going backwards.

We've been through an attack. That's when things really shook up the country. It shook our conscience. The attacks of September the 11th affected our economy. Remember, airplanes weren't flying; Wall Street was shut down; banks were closed. I mean, it was a terrible time for our Nation.

We went through corporate scandals. Make no mistake about it, when you've got a system that relies upon trust—in other words, somebody opening up the books, and you trust in what you read—and that trust has been violated by a corporate officer, it affected our economy. It shook our confidence in the system. But we acted. We acted to overcome all these obstacles. We passed tough new corporate reforms. The message ought to be clear to everybody now that if you don't tell the truth, we're coming after you, to keep the trust.

We acted after the enemy attacked us. I'll talk about that a little later. We also acted to help cure the ills of a recession. I believe that when somebody has got more money in their pocket to save or spend or invest, it causes there to be an increase in demand for goods and services, and when there's an increase in demand for goods and services, somebody is going to produce the good or a service. If somebody produces that good or a service, somebody is more likely to find a job.

My whole focus on getting out of this recession was to help the economy grow so people can find work, and we're making progress. We've added 1.5—nearly 1.5 million new jobs since last August. We're a strong economy. If you look at all the major industrialized nations in the world, we're the strongest. That's where we should be.

There's more to do—there's more to do. We're going to talk about the entrepreneurial spirit. See, I don't think the role of Government is to create wealth. I believe the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit can soar and is strong, where the strong businesses—you know what that means? You see, in order to keep jobs here at home, that means we better have the best environment for job creation in the world. We want jobs to be here in New Mexico and in Texas and all around the country, like we all do. That means this has got to be the best place to be an employer, which means good tax policy; it means we've got to do something about all these lawsuits, which are threatening the job creators.

We've got to do something on health care costs. I'll tell you what we can do on health care costs. We can take care of our seniors with good Medicare law, which we've done. We can have more community health centers in urban New Mexico and rural New Mexico and the tribal areas of New Mexico to help poor citizens get primary care and take the pressure off our emergency rooms. We can have associated health care—I mean associated health plans, which will allow small businesses to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries so they can have the same purchasing power as large companies do and, therefore, better afford insurance for their employees.

We can continue to promote health savings accounts, which allow individuals and small businesses to put money aside for workers and/or yourself on a tax-free basis, which will help control costs. We can spread new technologies, electronic records for patients, to help wring out the inefficiencies which now exist in the medical system.

And you know what else we need to do in order to make sure health care is available and affordable? Medical liability reform. These lawsuits are making—I'm telling you, the frivolous lawsuits are running up the cost of health care, and they're driving doctors out of business, and they're hurting our hospitals. And I don't think you can be pro-patient and pro-doctor and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. I think you have to choose. My opponent has made his choice, and he

put him on the ticket. [*Laughter*] I made my choice. We're standing with the patients and the doctors and the small-business owners.

In order to make sure jobs stay here and the economy is strong, we need good trade policy. Let me tell you something about trade. Our economy has been open for goods from overseas. You know why? If you're a customer and you have more choices, you're going to get a better product at a better price. That's how the economy works. The more choices you have as a customer, the more likely it is you're going to get a product that you want at higher quality and better price.

And so Presidents before me from both parties have said let's help the customers of America—the consumers—you. In return, though, other countries have not opened their markets to our products like we have opened our markets to theirs. Good public policy and good trade policy says to places like China and elsewhere, "Open up your markets. Ours are open. You open up yours." We can compete with anybody, anytime, anyplace, so long as the rules are fair.

I'm going to talk—I'm going to ask Rudy Gonzalez to stand up. Rudy is a small-business owner. One of the things that—one of the things I love to do is talk to small-business owners, people who have started their own business. Isn't that a fantastic thing to be able to say? Rudy owns his own business. And he started it himself, which is really good. It means that something is going right in the society where people are willing to risk capital to start their own business.

Part of our tax relief plan was aimed directly at the Rudys, the small businesses of the world, because 90 percent of the small businesses are Subchapter S or sole proprietorships. That's legalese for they pay tax at the individual income tax rate, not corporate tax rate. And so when you hear us saying we're—reduce the income tax, the individual income taxes, think about Rudy. Think about his business.

Rudy, when did you start your company?

Mr. Gonzalez. Well, Mr. President, first of all, thank you for inviting me. I started my company back in 1997. And I'm a first-generation Hispanic. My parents were born in Mexico. They came over to this country because, just like you, Mr. President, they

have three fundamental values, a belief in a higher power, a belief in the family as the best institution to secure our future, and a belief that if you work hard and you apply yourself, in the United States you can get anywhere you want to be.

The President. That's great. *Fe, familia, y esperanza—fe, familia, y esperanza.* Exactly right. What does your business do? In case somebody might be listening. [*Laughter*]

[*Mr. Gonzalez made brief remarks.*]

The President. Actually, let me stop you for a minute. I appreciate the credit. No, you did it, see. They wouldn't be giving you a contract if you couldn't do the job. You've got to be able to do the job. And if you can't do the job, then you shouldn't be given the contract. But you can do the job. You're good at what you do. Thanks for the credit. I don't deserve it, you do.

Let me ask you this question: How many people have you hired this year?

Mr. Gonzalez. Well, I'd like to go back a little bit. When I started off—you were right, I started by myself in 1997. Today, we have approximately 65 employees. This year—we've grown every single year since 2001. This year, we added 20 new employees.

The President. That's good. Let me stop you there. Let me stop you. A lot of the job growth is happening because companies like Rudy are expanding their job base. Most new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. It's important for the American people to understand that. And so you're seeing Rudy hires 20 here, and somebody else hires 20 there, and it begins to add up. People are working in the small-business sector. That's why we've got to make sure small businesses have got affordable health care. And that's why we've got to make sure tax policy does not harm small businesses.

Are you making investments this year?

Mr. Gonzalez. Yes, sir, I sure am.

The President. What will you be buying? [*Laughter*] Just in case there's a seller here. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Gonzalez. You can talk to my friend Ken over there because this year, he sold us four vehicles.

The President. Okay. [Laughter] The only reason I ask is that people have got to understand when you hear the tax relief encouraged investment, investment means you're purchasing something, and somebody has to make that which you purchase and sell that which you purchase. And that's how the economy works. There's a million decision-makers, or more than that, like Rudy who are out saying the Tax Code encourages me to buy something, and as that purchasing takes place, it adds economic vitality and growth.

Rudy is an S corp. That means he pays tax at the individual income tax rate. And so when you hear my opponent talking about taxing the rich—that means running up the rate, the high rates—he's really taxing small businesses. See, they put out \$2.2 trillion of new spending promises. He hasn't even got to September yet, by the way. [Laughter] And he says he's going to pay for it by taxing the rich. That means that S corps that are doing okay are going to pay higher taxes. We don't need to be taking money out of the small-business coffers as this economy is beginning to grow. If most new jobs are created by small businesses, and most small businesses are Subchapter S or sole proprietorships, it makes no sense to run up the taxes on these people as this economy is beginning to grow.

You know what else I think? You know what else I think when they say "tax the rich"? Most rich people are able to avoid taxes, and if you can't raise enough money from taxing the rich, guess who pays the taxes?

Audience members. [Inaudible]

The President. Yes, you do. But we're not going to let him. That's what this campaign is about, to make sure we've got good tax policy.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. All right, Rudy. Go ahead.

[Mr. Gonzalez made further remarks.]

The President. Fabulous. See, that's what he's talking about. The tax relief encouraged him to make this investment.

Good job, Rudy. Thanks for coming. Appreciate it. Thanks. Good job.

We've got another entrepreneur with us, Vern Raburn. He is the—so here's a guy who said, "I can build a better airplane." That's what you call a grand vision. [Laughter]

Why don't you tell the folks about your company.

[Mr. Raburn made brief remarks.]

The President. McCain and I will fly the first one. [Laughter] So how's it going? I mean, this is—this is—

Mr. Raburn. Things are going great.

The President. You've hired since I saw you last, 4 years ago, how many?

Mr. Raburn. Well, 4 years ago, at this time, we had about 18 employees. We have 342 employees now.

The President. That's good. And like what skill level is required—skill level of the worker?

Mr. Raburn. Skill levels—we have very high skill level. Most of our workforce today are engineers, manufacturing folks, white-collar workers. In fact, our average salary of each of our employees is about twice that of the average family income in New Mexico.

The President. Yes, let me stop you there. One of the real challenges we have in our country to make sure jobs stay here is to educate people, is to make sure the education system works. You just heard what—it's a new business, new business. He says that we pay twice as much as the average income, but we require high-level skills. You know what that says to me? It says to me that we've got to make sure No Child Left Behind works. We've got to make sure we keep raising the bar, make sure the young kids can read and write and add and subtract early, before it's too late. We've got to make sure our community colleges are able to train workers for the jobs of the 21st century, so that Eclipse can find a workforce necessary to make this company fly.

So when are we going to see the first unit take off?

Mr. Raburn. Well, we'll be flying again late this year, and we expect to have the aircraft certified in early '06, March of '06. Today we've got orders for about 2,200 airplanes, about \$2.5 billion in back—[applause].

The President. That's good.

Mr. Raburn. Good problem.

The President. Yes. Well, Vern's pulling to make sure this economy stays strong. Any of them overseas?

Mr. Raburn. A lot of those are overseas.

The President. Let me tell you something. See, if we get into a mode where we become economic isolationists, he won't be able to sell these airplanes overseas. We don't need trade wars. He wants to be able to sell this product overseas without having to compete with government bureaucracies and unnecessary tariffs and restrictions. That's why we believe in fair trade and open trade.

You got workers here who are going to be working because you've got planes being sold overseas. So when you hear them talk about trade, you need to be thinking about jobs. Jobs exist when you're able to trade overseas. You've got some farmers in this State, don't you? *[Laughter]* Yes, the farm economy is strong around the country. You know why? Because not only are we feeding our own people, we're feeding other people. Other people are eating our corn and our soybeans and our wheat, because we're opening up markets—still working to get that New Mexico cattle around the world. Open up markets for the Mexican cattlemen—and Texas cattlemen too, I want you to know. *[Laughter]*

So what else? What else is on your mind, Vern? You get the chance to tell the President something. *[Laughter]* By the way, I guarantee he's a big believer in tort reform. *[Laughter]* A lot of airline companies, a lot of manufacturers in the past got shut down because of all kinds of lawsuits. And these lawsuits—we want good justice in America, but when the trial bar converts the law into a legal lottery, it begins to affect jobs. You just got to know that. It's one thing to have justice; it's another thing to go overboard with justice, because people start to lose work. I don't know what your opinion is—

Mr. Raburn. I agree. *[Laughter]*

The President. Yes. See, you'd think I was a lawyer. I'm not.

[Mr. Raburn made further remarks.]

The President. Yes, that's strong. See, this is a vibrant company. And I'm excited to be here. I want to thank you for inviting us. He's

got a newly-hired employee named Vernon Oliver. Where's Vern? There he is. Hi, Vern. Welcome. So what happens to you? So how do you end up here in the airplane manufacturing world?

[Mr. Oliver made brief remarks.]

The President. What Vernon is telling you is, is that since 9/11, things have changed. People are getting their confidence; jobs are coming back; and in his case, he had the skill levels necessary to fill the jobs.

Yesterday, we were in Florida, and we talked to some people that needed to go back to community colleges, but we were happy to help them go back to community colleges. There's all kinds of plans, trade adjustment assistance, and NAFTA-related job loss. People who then can get a scholarship or get direct grants to go back and retrain for the jobs which actually exist. This fellow didn't need to be retrained. He just showed up, and they wanted him. And he saved \$3,000 in taxes last year. And he's going to save \$3,000 this year.

Remember, we not only reduced income taxes on everybody who pays taxes, but we helped people with children by raising the child credit to \$1,000; and we reduced the marriage penalty; we created a 10-percent bracket. In other words, we said we're going to help families. And this family right here has got \$3,000 in relief—I think that's right—you probably can say, "Mind your own business, Mr. President." *[Laughter]*

Mr. Oliver. No, sir. *[Laughter]*

The President. But if the tax relief is not made permanent, his taxes go up by \$1,200. See, I believe Government can set priorities and fund our priorities and that after the priorities are funded the people can spend that money better than the Government can spend it. That's what I believe. And I like the fact that Vernon's got \$3,000 additional of his own money in his pocket. It's his money to begin with, of course, and so he has it.

Well, thanks for coming, Vernon.

And Guy is with you as well, Guy Hoisington. All right. He's a newly hired guy. Tell us, Guy.

[Mr. Hoisington made brief remarks.]

The President. Here's a guy who tried out the promised land for a while—that would be Texas—[*laughter*—]changed his mind, came home to the other—to the enchanted land, and is working because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. He's able to more realize his dream, which is to raise your family here. So the job of government is to help when needed. The tax relief helps his family. I suspect it helped him move. I think it—I know it helps him raise his family.

Mr. Oliver. Yes, Vern helped me move, too.

The President. He helped? That's good. [*Laughter*] You must be good at what you do.

Mr. Oliver. Yes, sir.

The President. That's good. That's real good. [*Laughter*] But the point is—that what I'm trying to tell you is, is that when the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, when people like Vern feel comfortable about taking a risk and expanding and growing, people can find work. That's what we want in America. We want people to find work. We want people to be comfortable with their lives as best as they can.

You know, we can't make you decide to be somebody, but we can help you. We can help educate your children, to make sure they're educated. We can provide tax relief so that you're more comfortable and confident in tough times and also to help this economy grow. That's what we're talking about. We're talking about the proper role of Government. We're talking about how to make sure Government stands side by side with moms and dads and entrepreneurs and workers.

One of the—one of my goals is to continue to push an ownership society in America. First-generation American says, "I own my own business." I just think those are wonderful words. I like the idea of health accounts where people own them and manage them so that the principal decisionmakers for health care are doctors and patients, not bureaucrats.

I see some younger faces here, and Social Security—the solvency of Social Security is an issue for future generations. McCain, Domenici, and I are in good shape—[*laughter*—]at least our age group. But when you

start looking at younger workers, down there in the thirties and twenties, there's a question of whether or not Social Security is going to be around. And therefore, we need to explore with Congress the idea of personal savings accounts for younger workers—their option—so Social Security exists.

And finally, one of the great promises of this country is homeownership. There's something—the homeownership rate in America is at an alltime high. More minorities are owning their homes than ever before. In other words, we got more people opening their door and saying, "Welcome to my home." Those are magical words, aren't they? I think a healthy society is one in which people own something. If you own something, you have a stake in the future of your country.

Today we've got Debra and Arnold Reano. Thank you all for coming. I'm honored you're here. First of all, I want you to know Debra's birthday is today. Happy birthday. Arnold whispered in my ear when we were coming out. Secondly, see the beautiful jewelry she's wearing and he's wearing—they made it. They're artisans. That's a tradition of New Mexico, where people are really skilled at making beautiful jewelry. Thanks for mine. I told Debra that I'm going to play like I bought it for Laura. [*Laughter*] No, I'm not. No, I wouldn't do that. Because she's probably watching on C-SPAN. [*Laughter*]

You all just bought a home.

[*Mr. Reano made brief remarks.*]

The President. What he's talking about is the Indian Home Loan Guarantee Program, which is a way to encourage homeownership in tribal areas. And it's working. That's what we want, isn't it? Doesn't it make sense to have public policy aimed at helping people own their own home? I can't think of a better use of resources. It's working.

[*Mr. Reano made further remarks.*]

The President. By the way, this couple saved \$3,200 in Federal income taxes last year. Tax relief helps all kinds of people.

Good. Listen, I appreciate you coming. I asked them to come—we asked them to come because homeownership is valid for everybody. We want people owning their own

home all across the country—every corner of America, we want people to put out that welcome mat, “Welcome to my home.” And it’s happening. I think one of the most positive things that’s happening in the country is there’s more minority small-business owners in America and more people from all walks of life owning their own home.

Thank you all for coming. It’s good to see your girls too—beautiful girls.

One way to make sure the economy continues to grow is to keep the country safe. That’s a charge we’ve been given. Nobody wants to be a war President, but an enemy which had been planning for a long time struck us. And we must never forget the lessons of that day. I’m going to give you three quick lessons. As fellow citizens, it’s important to know—for you to know that I know the stakes and that I know the realities of the world in which we live.

Lesson one is there’s an enemy out there which hates us because of what we believe. And you cannot negotiate with them. You cannot talk sense into them. It’s hard for the American conscience to understand the nature of these people, but they behead people because they know we’ve got hearts and we know we weep. They know we value human life and human dignity. And they’re trying to shake our will. And the only way to deal with these folks is to bring them to justice.

Second lesson, which we’ll do this year and we’ll do over the next 4 years—we must bring them to justice in places where they hide and plot so we do not have to face them here at home. That’s the reality of the world, is that this is a different kind of enemy—a different kind of enemy. These are people that will hide in caves, and they will seek safe haven. Their ideal situation is where they can find a weak government that fears them or likes them and lets them hide and lets them burrow in the—in their countryside or in their cities.

And so, the second lesson is that we need to send clear messages, strong messages to countries around the world that say if you harbor a terrorist—in other words, if you provide safe haven for these people, if you allow them to arm up and plot and plan and train, you will be held to account just like the terrorists will be.

And that explains our Afghanistan policy. And that explains why we took action we did in Afghanistan. We said to the Taliban, “Get rid of these people. Turn them over, or face consequences.” And by the way, if America says something, it must be easy to understand, and you must mean it. In order—if we’re uncertain or if we doublespeak, the world will drift toward tragedy. That’s the reality of the world in which we live. It’s a lesson that we must remember.

By the way, on Afghanistan, it is—there’s still hard work there. But think about what’s happened in a very quick period of time. Think about this. There is going to be a Presidential election in a country that was ruled by this barbaric regime, so barbaric that many young girls never got to go to school and their mothers were publicly whipped. That’s barbaric. And now they’re going to have a Presidential election. Over 8 million people are registered to vote. And here I’m going around the country saying, “Please register to vote, and vote”—these people, when given a chance, are showing up in big numbers, in spite of the fact that some of these thugs are trying to stop them from going to the ballot box.

I was in Cleveland, Ohio, kicking off the International Children’s Game. And standing in front of me was the Afghan girls soccer team. I’m telling you, I wish—it was—there wasn’t a dry eye in my house. It’s unbelievable to think that in a very short period of time, people are liberated. Free countries are peaceful countries. The world is better off, and America is more safe. The third lesson of—because Afghanistan is free.

The third lesson is, when we see a threat, we must take it seriously before it fully materializes. That’s a serious lesson of September the 11th. You see, it’s a different kind of war—it’s a different kind of war. We cannot hope for the best anymore. In the old days, we could, because we thought oceans would protect us. It wasn’t all that long ago that we thought we were safe from harm’s way. And all of a sudden, on that fateful day, the world changed. And these lessons are serious lessons, because we’re talking about the most solemn duty of a government, and it’s to protect the people. We must take threats seriously.

And so, that begins to explain to you why I made the decision I made. Senators McCain and Domenici came to the same conclusion I did, that Saddam Hussein was a threat. And I want you to remember, he was a threat because he behaved like a threat. He had used weapons of mass destruction on his own people. He had terrorist ties. There was terrorist organizations in and out of Iraq over time. He had defied the world, I think 17 resolutions. In other words, imagine a world saying, "Okay, we're only going to tell you one more time." [*Laughter*] "This is the 16th time we're going to tell you. Cough them up, get rid of your ability to make weapons, get rid of what you even have, or face serious consequences." And if you say it 17 times and nothing happens, pretty soon you embolden somebody whose instincts were dark and dim.

This is a person who tortured his own people. There were mass graves. He invaded his neighbors. We had been to war with him before. He was shooting at our pilots that were enforcing—he was a threat. And so I went to the Congress and said to the Congress, "Gosh, we've got a threat here, and the world has changed." By far the vast majority of Members of Congress—from both political parties—they took a good look at the intelligence. They looked at what I was looking at. We all came to the same conclusion, including my opponent. He looked at that intelligence—[*applause*].

And then the U.N. looked at it and said, again, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." And they said, but—the world said we work in diplomacy then, which is wise to do. And they said, "Gosh, let's let the inspectors work." So, okay. It seems to make sense, doesn't it, let the inspectors in. But guess what. They were being deceived, systematically deceived by Saddam Hussein. He wasn't—he was doing all kinds of things to prevent them from finding out the truth.

So I had a choice; Tony Blair had a choice; Silvio Berlusconi had a choice; Aleksander Kwasniewski had a choice; John Howard had a choice. And that is, hope for the best, forget the lessons of September the 11th, trust a madman, or take action to defend our country. You've just got to know, folks, given that choice, I will defend us every time.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you all. A couple other points I want to make—let me make a couple of points, and I'll answer some questions if you have some.

First, when we put troops in harm's way, they will have our Government's support. A lot of folks in this town—you got relatives in the military; you've been in the military yourself. This is a—this is what I believe. This is what Pete believes. This is what John believes. We believe—and a lot of others in Washington do too. That's why I asked for an \$87 billion supplemental last September to make sure our troops had what they needed: spare parts, body armor, fuel, support. A difference in this campaign is that my opponent voted against the supplemental funding.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. He has said on the TV shows, before the vote came up, there's no excuse for not supporting the troops. And then when he was asked why he didn't ask for it, he said, well, he actually did vote for it, right before he voted against it. [*Laughter*] It's—and then he said it was a complicated matter. There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat. They need—the troops need our support.

I want to make two other points, and then I'll answer questions. The other day, he was asked on a—by a TV reporter or a newspaper reporter, what about the troops? And he said he's going to substantially reduce the number of troops six months after he's the President. Now, let me—listen, we all want the mission to be completed as quickly as possible. But we want the mission to be completed.

Secondly, the mission is not going to be completed as quickly as possible if the enemy thinks that we're going to be removing a substantial number of troops in six months. Thirdly, the person—the people that should be making the recommendations as to whether or not the mission is nearly completed so that we can relieve troops are the commanders on the ground. That's who ought to be making the recommendations. I know what I'm doing when it comes to winning this war. And I'm not going to be sending mixed signals.

Now, the other thing I want to tell you about is, when people say, “What is—what are you trying to accomplish, what is America trying to accomplish,” what we’re going to accomplish is a free society in the heart of a part of the world where people are desperate for freedom. See, this is a historic moment in world history, I think, because freedom has got the capacity to change people’s lives in a positive way. America stands for peace, and we understand that the best way to achieve peace is to spread freedom, because free societies listen to the hopes and aspirations of their people. The best way to defeat resentment is to spread freedom and hope. You can’t have a hopeful society if you’ve got tyranny looming over you. You can’t have a hopeful society if you’re not allowed to express your opinion or worship freely.

So that’s what you’re seeing. We’re seeing the short-term actions of our Government are to protect us. That’s why we’re using force, to protect us. The long-term solution is to spread liberty.

I was having dinner with Koizumi, who is the Prime Minister of Japan, and we were talking about how to keep the peace in North Korea. Think about what—think about that for a second, the American President and the Prime Minister of Japan, former enemies—countries were former enemies. Maybe some of you here in the audience were fighting the Japanese in World War II. His dad was, and my dad was, and I bet a lot of other dads were as well. And here we are now, sitting down at the same table, talking about peace with a former—and you know why I was able to do so and other Presidents were able to do so, is because after World War II, we believed so strongly in liberty that we worked with the Japanese to develop a society that was self-governing, that believed that—based upon the principles of human dignity and human rights and human freedom.

Now, there were skeptics who said, “No, it’s too hard to work. We’ve been at it for too long. This country can’t self-govern.” But fortunately, predecessors believed so strongly in the ability of liberty to change the habits of citizens for the good that they stuck to their guns, and now I’m talking to Koizumi

about the peace. Someday, an American President is going to sit down with an elected Iraqi leader and they’re going to say, “Thank God old Bush, McCain, and Domenici believed in freedom. Thank God the American people listen to the skeptics, rejected pessimistic thought, and said, ‘Let’s complete the mission.’”

Freedom is going to change the world. Freedom—and you know what else freedom does? It validates what we believe in our hearts. Freedom is not America’s gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God’s gift to each man and woman in this world.

Let me—[applause]—thank you all. Let me answer some questions while we’ve got time. Thanks for giving me a chance to talk. Now, I’ll give you a chance to answer some questions. We’re here for a little bit, and then John and I are heading west. We’re going out to Phoenix, and then I’m off to Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, and Iowa. I want to win. I’m willing to work.

All right, who’s got a question? You’ve got one?

Support for the President/Stem Cell Research

Q. First I want to make a prediction.

The President. Okay, thank you.

Q. President Bush is going to win by a landslide.

The President. Okay, we can leave it there if you like.

Q. Number two—

The President. How about we work as if it’s going to be close. [Laughter]

Q. Number two, I respect your position on human life and your demand for abortion. I respect it.

The President. Thank you.

Q. And I thank you every moment. You’re the top President when it comes to us speaking out for life. Thank you.

The President. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

Yes, sir—thank you, sir. I hope you’re a good prognosticator. [Laughter]

Q. First, I agree with him. I hope we see you in a landslide.

The President. Let's just win the thing. [Laughter] Let's just win it. Thank you, though.

Q. First of all, let me say it's an honor to speak to you. It's an honor every day when I get to pray for you as President.

The President. Thank you, sir. I appreciate that.

Q. I just—I wanted to say that. I wanted to agree with him—your stand for life, for stem cells. We do not need to be doing research with fetal stem cells. And I appreciate that. Could I ask you two more questions?

The President. Sure, go ahead. Ask them. **Q.** Real short.

The President. Okay. You haven't asked one yet. But go ahead. [Laughter]

Q. Can I introduce my mother and mother-in-law who are new citizens to this country?

The President. That's a very interesting move by the guy. [Laughter] He's got the President standing here, and he wants me to meet the mother-in-law. [Laughter] Strong move. Absolutely. And the mother—yes. Fantastic. Is this the mom-in-law?

Q. This is my mother-in-law.

The President. Where are you from, mom-in-law?

Q. Okinawa.

The President. Fantastic. New citizen?

Q. Yes.

The President. This year?

Q. Two years.

The President. Two years ago. So this is your first Presidential election?

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay. Welcome—welcome. There's a long tradition in America that you only vote for the person who looks you in the eye and asks. Just kidding. And where's mom? Oh, hi, mom. Strong move. That's very good, yes. Are you listening to your mother?

Q. I do.

The President. I listen to mine too. In my case, I don't have much choice. In my case.

Let me talk about stem cells real quick. There had been no research on stem cells prior to my arrival. I said that stem cell lines which had already existed prior to a certain date ought to be allowed to receive Federal

money to research, and from that point forward, that we ought to make sure we deal with science and ethics in a very balanced way. And so we're just beginning to understand embryonic stem cell research. We're also, by the way, spending research dollars on adult stem cell research, and we're also spending it on fetal tissue.

And so, what we're—what I'm saying to you is, is that I think my administration has struck a proper balance between science and ethics. I think we have done a very good job about exploring that which is possible without stepping over a line that we may come to regret later on. And so I assembled a panel of experts, ethicists, to help me better understand this very vital issue.

Listen, we—I'm sure you've heard from folks with juvenile—got a child with juvenile diabetes. I certainly have. And I care deeply about the families who are wondering whether or not we can do more to help solve their child's problems. It's sad, and I know these Senators have heard from those with juvenile diabetes. And the policies I made were, on the one hand, trying to help as best as we can move science forward and, at the same time, keep an ethical balance so that we promote a culture of life. And the decision I made, in my judgment, is the right decision. And it's one that respects the value of life and, on the other hand, is one that says, hopefully science can use these existing stem cell lines, of which I think there's going to be 23 which are viable and vibrant, and they're just beginning to look at them to help come up with cures that we all want to have happen—we all want—we want human—we want these young kids with—that have been affected by juvenile diabetes to better survive. That's what we want. But thank you for bringing up the subject.

Any—yes, sir, here's a man right here. First of all, he's one of my—he's cheering really loud. [Laughter] Thank you.

Opportunities for the Disabled

Q. Thank you, President Bush, and I just want to say it's a honor to speak to you today. And you probably already touched on this question, but seeing as I'm a disabled person myself—I'm 20 years old and going to college in the great State of—well, I live in the great

State of New Mexico, but I also go to college in the great State of Texas. [Laughter] And I'm——

The President. Where you going, by the way? Excuse me for interrupting, but where are you going?

Q. McMurray University in Abilene.

The President. Oh, yes. Abilene, Texas.

Q. Yes, sir. And my current major is political science, and I'm just curious——

The President. I better give you some counseling before it's too late. No, go ahead. [Laughter]

Q. How can we, as a team—and I understand people ask you for help, but how can we, as a team, be ensured that other people that are disabled can be a part of the big business or small business, to help bring jobs for the people of this country?

The President. Yes, absolutely. I appreciate that very much. One of the great advances of our era is technology. There's fantastic technological opportunities for the visually-impaired to be able to have a computer that speaks to them. I don't know if you've been involved with that or not. You have?

Q. Yes, sir, I have a——it's called a braille note, and it has a braille display. And I also have a thing on my computer—it's called Jaws for Windows—that gets on and reads the screen to me whenever I get on the Internet.

The President. See, that's coming. So one thing we can do is help members of our community who need this kind of program. We can help them with financial aid to buy them. I mean, this is equally as important as going to college, is to have the opportunity—listen, the role of Government is to help people help themselves. And we're talking about helping this guy with—we're helping him realize his dreams. There are touch computers where, if you're disabled without the ability—and you can't use your hands, there are new computers and new ability to be able to turn a computer on and log on and surf the Net, and that technology is now more available.

What I'm telling you is, to answer your question, is to make sure technologies are more readily available and we help people afford them as they come on the market. And it's going to change people's lives for the bet-

ter. Again, we want everybody to be able to participate in this experience called America. And we want people to be able to realize their dreams, no matter their condition, or no matter whether they're first generation or 800th generation—18th or how ever many generations there have been, and that's what we want.

So I appreciate your question, sir. Thank you.

Q. And I just want to say thank you so much, and I'm really proud of what you're doing and what America's doing, because—and I want to thank my mom and my parents, because I'm the only blind people—or blind person in my family, and I'm excited to graduate and go to college and be part of that small business.

The President. Congratulations.

Let's see, all right, man in a cowboy hat. Yes, we've got to try the cowboy hat. You're next.

Support for the President/Veterans Benefits

Q. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. I'm a retired Navy, 20 years. I flew the S-3, the same that you came aboard in the Lincoln.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. Four tours in Vietnam, and all I can say is thank God we finally have a Commander in Chief.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Let me say something. You've got a lot of veterans in this State. People have served their country in this State, and I want to thank you for your service. And I thank you for setting such a good example for the——

Audience member. Hoorah!

The President. There you go. [Laughter] For the hoorahs of the world. But thank—[laughter]—thank you for setting such a good example for those who wear our uniform. I'm going to the VFW Convention on Monday. I'm looking forward to going. I've got something to say. I've got something to say about how we've worked together to make sure we've honored our vets with good, strong health care. I made some promises to the

VFW in 2000. I'm going to go back and remind them of the promises I made and remind them of the promises we have kept. And that's what we owe our veterans.

Yes, ma'am. There you go. No, I said—yes, ma'am. Sorry. *[Laughter]*

Audience member. *[Inaudible]*

The President. You bet. Crank that thing up.

Domestic Violence

Q. Mr. President, I would like to know what your administration has done to help women and children in domestic violence situations.

The President. Well, we've said to the Justice Department, work with States to make sure that the States have got the resources necessary to bring people to justice. That's what States are supposed to do, supposed to—States are supposed to pass laws that make it easier for law enforcement to be able to do its job when it comes to domestic violence.

And when I was the Governor of Texas, we made it easier for an abused spouse to be able to call her spouse into account without facing retribution. We had notification laws when a spouse was released from jail. In other words, we stood on the side of the abused person. We had the law stand side by side with the person, as opposed to making the environment such that many people were afraid to turn in an abusive spouse and, two, if the abusive spouse had been punished, they were afraid of the consequences after the spouse had been out.

This is—the truth of the matter is most good policy—or policy is made at the State level under State laws. And what the Federal Government can do, the Federal Government can help on grantmaking to help States with those type of laws.

Q. And what about the Family Justice Center Initiative? Didn't you announce that last year?

The President. The family—

Q. The pilot program—\$21 million?

The President. Oh, I did, so thanks for reminding me. *[Laughter]* How quickly we forget. It was a loaded question, wasn't it?

Let me ask you something. U.S. Marine Corps mom—is that what that means? You

have a son in the Marine Corps? I know you didn't want to ask a question, but—

Support for Troops/All-Volunteer Military

Q. I want to thank you for all the support you have given the military.

The President. Where is he? Hold on for a minute. Where is your son?

Q. He's in Yuma, and he's on his way to be deployed.

The President. Is he?

Q. Yes.

The President. Let me say something to the mom here. First of all, you're going to be nervous, and I know you are, and you should be. But I just want you to know that your son is making an historic contribution to the peace and security of our country.

Q. Thank you.

The President. And you know what—you know the great thing about this country? I'll tell you the great thing about the country. There's a lot of people praying for him. Yes. I appreciate you wearing "USMC mom." That's great. He's going to be just fine, by the way.

Q. He said that he was anxious to go over there and do his job and defend our country.

The President. Yes, that's what he's doing, and it's important for everybody to understand that—it's important for everybody to understand that. It's important to understand the consequences of her son's decision, first, to join an All-Volunteer Army, and secondly, to be in a position to go over and help freedom take hold in Iraq. That's really what we're talking about.

On the one hand, we're defeating people that could come here to hurt us, but we're also spreading freedom. And you know what's going to make it work? It's when the Iraqis and the Afghan step up and say, "I'm now ready to defend my country." And that's what's happening—that's what's happening. And the enemy sees it happening. And that's why they're taking action. See, that's why they're blowing up innocent life. They see what's happening. And that's why we cannot send mixed signals, and that's why we've got to be firm in our resolve. And while we are, that's why we've got to be thankful to the

moms who raised a son who says, "I want to serve my country."

I was asked the other day whether or not we ought to—some think we ought to get rid of the All-Volunteer Army. The answer is absolutely not. We need to keep the All-Volunteer Army. And what we need to do is to make sure that people—there's incentive to stay in the All-Volunteer Army, by making sure people are better paid, which we have done over the course of four appropriations bills. Since I've been the President, military pay is up 21 percent. We've got to make sure the housing on the bases are better than adequate. And we've got—in other words, we've got to win the hearts and souls not only of the soldiers but of their families. And we're making good progress toward that. But this All-Volunteer Army is, one, an important concept, and two, it's working.

Let's see. Yes, sir.

Q. Mr. President, thank you so much. I just returned from a 13-month tour, Lieutenant Colonel Jackson.

The President. Thanks. Where were you?

Q. I was the deputy commander of our forces in Kosovo.

The President. Oh, fantastic. Thanks for doing that. Bondsteel?

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. I went there.

Q. I know you were there, and in fact, the education center is named after your wife.

The President. Is it? Well, smart move.

Q. Yes, sir. Mr. President, all the forces overseas are thankful that you are such a strong Commander in Chief, and even when I was medevac'd out—I was injured and medevac'd out to Germany, along with forces from Iraq and Afghanistan—the morale was very high, because we knew that you were in charge and going to take care of us.

The President. Well, thank you. Thank you, sir. Let me say something. Let me say something about medevac'ing troops. It's really important for our citizens to know that if somebody gets hurt, they're going to get really good treatment quickly—I mean quickly. And I know that a lot of us have been to Bethesda—I know John has and Pete has—or Walter Reed. These are the big hospitals in Washington, DC, that take care of

those who have been injured. These kids are coming off the battlefield in one or two days' time. I mean, we're taking kids who have been hurt, and we're getting them into incredibly good care quickly.

That's a—what a compassionate Government, when you think about it. You know, there's other governments that might let their troops kind of languish around, you know, maybe get them out of the tent somewhere, sometime. Not America—not America. We value every life. We appreciate the service of our troops. When I see these families in these hospitals, I'm quick to ask them, "Are you getting everything you need?" I need to know. And admittedly, sometimes the President gets the cook's tour, but the answer is, "Yes, Mr. President, they're taking care of my kid." And that's what families or citizens need to know about our country, is that we are grateful for the service of those who wear our uniform, because the world is going to be better off for it.

A couple of more questions. McCain is getting anxious. He wants to get to Phoenix—[laughter]—and so do I.

Who have we got here? Where's the little boy? This little guy? You got all kinds of little boys. Go ahead.

Photo With the President

Q. I was wondering if I could take a picture with you.

The President. Yes. [Laughter] All right, let him through. Crawl on underneath there. Scoot on through. Come on. Got it? Hello, Mom. [Laughter] Got it?

Yes, go ahead.

Prayer

Q. First of which, first part of comment, just know that my wife and I are praying for you. We appreciate what you've done the 4 years you've been in office.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Thank you for that. A question I have—

The President. I appreciate your prayers. Think about—I mean, work on your question while I say something here. [Laughter] It's an amazing country where people from all walks of life pray for the President. It really is. I'm grateful. I am really grateful. Any

President would be grateful. It's one of the most sustaining aspects of my life now, to know that people pray for me and Laura and the kids.

Go ahead.

Constitutional Amendment on Marriage

Q. The question I have—one of our concerns is, is the continued erosion of the moral fabric of this country with the—obviously the removal of prayer in schools, the removal of the Ten Commandments, abortion, and now we're faced with the issue of gay marriage. And obviously, there was an attempt to at least get it in the Constitution among the parties in Congress, with no success. What do you plan to do when you're reelected—

The President. Thank you.

Q. —to abolish that attempt by the left? And my second question is, would you mind if I got your autograph? [*Laughter*]

The President. We've started a bad trend here. Let me talk about marriage, traditional marriage. First of all, I believe our society is better off when marriage is defined as between a man and a woman. It's my belief.

Secondly—hold on a second. Secondly—secondly, this is an issue that ought to be decided by the people, not by a few judges. And that's what's caused the issue. That's what has brought this issue to a head, is because in a particular State, the four judges redefined the definition of marriage. That's what happened. And my worry is, is that that definition will be spread to other States, even though the people of those States do not accept that definition.

And now, there's laws on the books. And what happened was, a lot of the Senators accurately noted there's a current law on the book called the DOMA, Defense of Marriage Act, which specifically defines marriage as between a man or a woman and says that the actions of one State cannot affect the behavior in another State. And I readily concede that law is on the books, signed by my predecessor, by the way.

My worry has been that the courts will overturn that law and that we will end up with a series of activist judges defining marriage. And so the easiest way—not the easiest way, probably the toughest way—but the

clearest way to define marriage is to put it in the Constitution like I suggested.

Now, let me also tell you, the constitutional process takes a long time. It—many amendments have taken years to be passed by the Senate and then ratified by the States. I will also explain to the American people that the ratification process of the constitutional amendment is an essential part of including people's opinions as to this very delicate issue.

And finally, let me encourage everybody, as we debate this issue, to do so with the utmost of respect. I mean, this is a issue that requires thoughtful dialog. It's a serious issue. And it's one that—I hope we can have a debate in a way that is uplifting and not tearing people down on either side of the issue. And I will pledge to you, I will do my very best to bring a thoughtful dialog on this vital issue.

And so what I'll do the next 4 years is continue to state what I believe. I'm not going to change my beliefs just because there's been an election. Quite the contrary. I will be telling people what I believe.

Okay, last question. You have been very patient. This is the last one. I hope everybody understands I've got to work. [*Laughter*]

Support for the President/Duty To Vote

Q. President Bush, we want you to know something. This group of ladies right here, we represent an international company—an international AGLOW fellowship. This is women all over the world. There is a woman over there by the name of Bernadette Martinez who is the prayer coordinator for New Mexico. And we want you to know, we are praying for you.

The President. Thank you.

Q. We are praying for righteous leaders in Washington and throughout our country, because we know that it's time for America to get back to its moral roots that our Founders put in place for us when this country was founded. And it is time for the people in this country to realize and to call out for righteous leaders. That is our right as God's children. And we are doing that.

The President. Thank you.

Q. And you will be in the White House.

The President. I appreciate that. One more? Okay, hold on. Let me tell you what else you can do. Let me tell you what else you can do. Register people to vote. And then, right around election time, start saying to people, we have a duty; we have a duty in a free society, no matter what you believe; we have a duty to vote. So I appreciate your enthusiasm and your drive. Convert it to getting people to the polls too, which I know you will.

Okay, final question. One more, this is it. Then we got to go to Arizona.

Support for Troops

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Yes, ma'am. No more hands going up; I'm a man of my word.

Q. And I am a persistent woman. My name is Cassandra Dennis. My husband is Captain Dominic Dennis. He sends his hellos all the ways from Log Base Seitz, Iraq.

The President. Good. Thank you. He's a captain—in the Army?

Q. Army National Guard.

The President. Very good.

Q. I want your prayers for him.

The President. You got it. Thank you very much. Yes. And tell you—I'll tell you what do. You know, one of the interesting possibilities now, because of high-tech, because of the high-tech world, is that you can e-mail your husband, correct?

Q. We e-mail. We do instant-messaging. We've got webcams. We have telephones.

The President. All right, why don't you do this, then? Would you do me a favor?

Q. Yes.

The President. Would you rather e-mail him or instant-message him?

Q. I'm going to instant-message him.

The President. Instant-message him. Instant-message him this: The Commander in Chief is grateful and incredibly proud of his service.

Thank you all. God bless. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. at the Eclipse Aviation hangar. In his remarks, he referred to Darren White, sheriff, Bernalillo County, NM; John Sanchez, southwest regional chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Patrick H. Lyons, New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands;

former Representative Manual Lujan, Jr., of New Mexico; Allen Weh, chairman, New Mexico Republican Party; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy; President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland; and Prime Minister John Howard of Australia.

Remarks in Phoenix, Arizona

August 11, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. So yesterday, there we were in a bus in northern Florida, and old John McCain said, "Wait until you get to Phoenix." He's right.

I'm working hard to ask for your vote. I'm here to let you know there is more to do to make America a safer place, a stronger place, and a better place. I'm here to ask for your help. We won Arizona last time; we're going to win it this time. And we're going to win a great national victory.

Thank you all for coming. I only wish that Laura were here to see this crowd. She is a remarkable woman. She is a great wife, a fantastic mother. I'm going to give you some reasons tonight to put me back in, but perhaps the most important reason of all is so that Laura has 4 more years.

I'm proud to be running with Dick Cheney. Now look, I admit it, he's not the prettiest face in the race. [Laughter] I didn't pick him for that reason. I picked him because of his judgment, his experience. I picked him because he can do the job.

I'm proud to be traveling with a great American and a fine citizen of this State, a person who served his Nation with distinction and honor—John McCain. I want to thank his wife, Cindy, for joining us as well. She's a class act, good lady.

I also want to thank my friend Jon Kyl, the other Senator from this State. You got two fine United States Senators from Arizona.

I want to thank my friends from the congressional delegation, Renzi, Franks, Shadegg, J.D. Hayworth, Jeff Flake, for their leadership.

I'm proud that Secretary of State Jan Brewer is here. I want to thank Jan for coming, and State Treasurer David Petersen. Listen, thank you all for coming.

I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank my friend Luis Gonzalez and his great wife, Christine. I know my friends the Lehmans are here. I'm glad they're here. Old Tom Lehman, I could use a putting lesson. *[Laughter]* I don't have much time to practice these days; I'm out working.

See, I'm asking for your help to register voters. You've got a lot of new people moving in this State, and they, like you, have a duty in a democracy to vote and to participate. We're asking for people to do a little extra work to register our fellow citizens and urge them to go to the polls. And when you get them headed to the polls, you might just tell them America will be better off with Bush-Cheney in the White House.

The past few years—in the past few years, Americans have been through a lot together, a whole lot, and we've accomplished a great deal. But there's only one reason to look backward at the record, and that is to determine who best to lead us forward. I'm running—I'm asking for your vote because so much is at stake. We have much more to do, much more to do to move this country forward and make it a better place.

We've got more to do to make our public schools the centers of excellence we all know they can be so that no child is left behind in America. When we came to office 3½ years ago, too many of our children were being just shuffled from grade to grade, year after year, without learning the basics. So we challenged the soft bigotry of low expectations. We raised the sights of everybody. We believe in accountability. We believe in local control of schools. We believe in challenging schools that refuse to change and refuse to teach.

And we're making progress. We're closing that achievement gap here in America. More of our children are learning to read and write and add and subtract, and there's more to do. We want our high school diplomas to mean something. We need to make sure our children are educated for the jobs of the 21st century, so we need to concentrate on

science and math. We need to bring technology into classrooms in America. What I'm telling you is, after 4 more years, a rising generation will have the hope and the skills necessary to succeed in this world.

We have got more work to do to make sure health care is available and affordable. We addressed the issue of our seniors square on. You might remember that political campaign after political campaign, our seniors were promised a stronger Medicare system. We got the job done. Our seniors now have the ability to choose a plan that meets their needs, and there will be coverage for prescription drugs for our seniors. We're doing more to make sure health care is available and affordable. We're expanding community health centers for low-income Americans. We're providing health savings accounts so American families can save tax-free to meet their own health care needs.

In order to make sure American families have got health care, we must allow small employers to join together to be able to purchase insurance at discounts that big companies are able to do. We'll harness technology to reduce costs and prevent mistakes. We'll expand research and seek new cures. And to make sure you've got affordable health care, we need to end the frivolous lawsuits that are harming our docs and harming our patients.

You cannot be pro-patient, pro-doctor, and pro-trial-lawyer at the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform now. In all we do to improve health care here in this country, we will make sure the health care decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by Washington, DC, bureaucrats.

We got more to do to make sure this economy is stronger. We've been through a lot. We've been through a recession; we've been through corporate scandals; we've been through the terror attacks. Yet we've overcome these obstacles. We've overcome these obstacles because we've got great workers in America. We've overcome these obstacles because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and the small-business sector of our economy

is flourishing. We've overcome these obstacles because we've got great ranchers and farmers. And we've overcome these obstacles because we delivered well-timed tax relief to the American people. Because we acted, our economy has grown at a rate as fast as any in nearly 20 years. Because we acted, we've added nearly 1.5 million jobs over the past year. Because we acted, Arizona's unemployment rate is at 4.7 percent.

We're making progress. We're not turning back. So long as anybody is looking for work, we're going to keep working to make sure there's a job available for them. There is more work to do to keep jobs here in America and to keep this job base growing; we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. We need to reduce the regulations on our employers in America. We need real, meaningful tort reform in America to keep jobs here. In order to keep jobs here at home, we need to be opening up markets for Arizona products. We must not become economic isolationists in America. We must be confident—you see, we can compete with anybody, anytime, anywhere, so long as the playing field is level. In order to be keeping jobs here in America, we've got to make sure our workers are trained for the jobs of the 21st century. That's why I'm such a strong backer of the community college system, not only here in Arizona but all across our country. In order to make sure we keep jobs here, we've got to be wise about how we spend your money, and we've got to keep your taxes low.

We're working together to protect our residents and forests across the West from catastrophic wildfires. Listen, I understand you're in a severe drought. Water is a precious commodity. And as a result of the drought you're in, our national treasures are—forest fires—are vulnerable. That's why I worked with John McCain and Jon Kyl to pass a bipartisan bill called Healthy Forests Restoration Act.

I understand the West. I understand the issues of the West. Some people took a different view of that Healthy Forests legislation. Back in October, my opponent told us Healthy Forests would let people chop down mountainsides of old-growth trees. When I signed the bill, he said we're taking a

chainsaw to public forests. I understand the West. I understand the issues you face out here. Yet, when he came out West to campaign, he turned that position around. Now he says he likes a lot of the parts of the law. I guess it's not only the wildfires that shift with the wind. [Laughter]

I'm running for 4 more years to keep our Nation's economy the strongest in the industrialized world. I'm running so our small businesses are vibrant. I'm running so our farmers and ranchers are healthy, and I'm running so people can find good-paying jobs.

We have more to do to wage and win the war against terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in the world. If America shows uncertainty or weakness in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. The world changed on that terrible September morning, and since that day, we've changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers and set up cells in nations around the world, including our own. Because we acted, because we acted with our friends, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Young girls now go to school for the first time in Afghanistan, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia weren't joining us in the war on terror. Today they are. Today, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are allies in the war on terror. They're after Al Qaida. America and the world are safer.

Because of our leadership, we're changing the world. Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies have sent a clear message and a strong message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. You might remember he was firing weapons at American pilots who

were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He had murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region.

We saw a threat. We looked at the intelligence, and we saw a threat. And as we did so, we remembered a vital lesson of September the 11th, and that lesson is we must take threats seriously, before they fully materialize.

I knew it was important on this vital matter to work with the United States Congress. So I went to the Congress and said Saddam Hussein's a threat. The Congress looked at the same intelligence, and members of both political parties, including my opponent, agreed that Saddam Hussein was a threat. And then we went to the United Nations

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. And the United Nations looked at the intelligence and concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat. And they passed a resolution that said "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the free world. As a matter of fact, when we sent inspectors in—or the world sent inspectors in, he systematically deceived the inspectors. And so I had a choice to make. My choice was do I forget the lessons of September the 11th—

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. —and hope for the best—

Audience members. No-o-o!

The President. —and trust the word and deeds of a madman, or do I take action to defend America. I will defend America every time.

Even though we have not found the stockpiles we expected to find, we do know that Saddam had the capability to make weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to our enemies. That was a risk we could not afford to take. Knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action. And America and the world are safer because Saddam Hussein sits in a prison cell.

Now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and almost 220 days after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has found a new nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, Senator Kerry now agrees with me that even though we have not found the stockpiles of weapons that we all believed were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. I want to thank my opponent for clearing that up. But just remember, there are 83 days left in the campaign—time enough to change his mind again.

I'm running for 4 more years because I know we must continue to work with our friends and allies to aggressively pursue the terrorists and the foreign fighters in places like Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. See, you cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with these people. We must engage the enemy around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

During the next 4 years, America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a strong coalition to help us defeat terror. Listen, we've got nearly 60 nations involved with the Proliferation Security Initiative. Nearly 40 nations are involved in Afghanistan. Some 30 nations are involved in Iraq. I'll continue to build our alliances and work with our friends for the sake of peace, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

America and the world are safer. We're heading to peace because our commitments are kept by the men and women of our military. I want to thank the veterans who are here for setting such a great example to the men and women of our military. I've had the privilege of meeting with those who defend our country and sacrifice for our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. Ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom and peace is in really good hands. And anytime—and our troops deserve the full support of the United States Government.

Last September, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, I proposed

supplemental funding to support them in their missions. This money was going to—this money did provide body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts for our military. In the Senate, only a small, out-of-the-mainstream minority of 12 Senators voted against that funding. Two of those twelve Senators are my opponent and his runningmate.

Audience members. Boo-o-o!

The President. My opponent tried to explain his vote this way: “I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it.” End quote. And then he went on to say that he was proud he and his runningmate voted against it, and then he went on to say, at another time, the funding issue is a complicated matter. There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We must work to change the conditions that give rise to terror: poverty and hopelessness and resentment. I see a lady holding a sign there that says, “My son is in Iraq.” I want you to know, ma’am, that your son is performing a duty that is changing the world. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful examples to their neighbors. These parts—people in these parts of the world are desperate for freedom. In Iraq and Afghanistan, there are now strong leaders who understand the power of free societies. And we understand the power of freedom in America. We know that free societies do not export terror. We know that in free societies, leaders listen to the hopes and aspirations of their people.

By serving the ideal of liberty, we are bringing hope to others, and that makes our country more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we’re making the world more peaceful. By serving the ideal of liberty, we’re serving the ideals of our country. Freedom is not America’s gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God’s gift to each man and woman in this world.

I’m running for 4 more years because I know we’ve got a lot of work to do to protect us. Enemies who hate us are still plotting to harm us. My opponent says that going to

war with the terrorists is actually improving their recruiting efforts. His logic is upside-down, and it shows a dangerous misunderstanding of the enemy we face. During the 1990s, terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us, long before America went to war with them. They don’t need an excuse for their hatred. It’s wrong to blame America for the anger and the evil of those killers. You don’t create terrorists by defending yourself and fighting back; you defeat the terrorists by fighting back.

Listen, the September—the 9/11 Commission wrote a good report, and it said that because of the actions we’ve taken since September the 11th, our homeland is safer, but we’re not yet safe. I agree with that conclusion. There’s more work to do. Beginning immediately after September the 11th, we started the hard process of reform. We created the new Department of Homeland Security. We passed the PATRIOT Act, which is vital; it is necessary to give our law enforcement the tools necessary to disrupt terrorist activity. We’re integrating intelligence and law enforcement better than ever before.

We’re taking up a lot of those recommendations. We’ve got to do a better job of securing our ports and borders and training our first-responders and dramatically improving our intelligence-gathering capabilities. I called on Congress to create the position of National Intelligence Director so that one person is in charge of coordinating our intelligence efforts overseas and here at home. There’s a lot of really good people working hard to defend the American people, and I’m proud of their efforts.

Now, reforms are never easy in Washington. It takes on—it requires taking on the entrenched interests, those who are happy with the status quo. It’s not enough to advocate reform; you have to be able to get it done. When it came to reforming our public schools, we’re getting the job done. When it comes to giving our health care reforms to our families, with more access and more choices, we’re getting the job done. When it comes to creating jobs in America, we’re getting the job done. When it comes to defending America and spreading the peace, we’re getting the job done. And when it

comes to choosing a President, you better have a President who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. We live in a time of rapid change. These are exciting times. One way to help American citizens during this time of change is to encourage an ownership society. We want people owning and controlling their own health care accounts. We want our Social Security system to work. Listen, for old people like me and McCain—[*laughter*—the Social Security is sound enough for us. I'm worried about the younger workers. I'm worried about the solvency of Social Security. Therefore, I think younger workers ought to be allowed to have personal savings accounts that they can call their own.

We want more people owning their business. I love the fact when somebody says to me, you know, "I just started my own business." We want more people owning their own home. Homeownership rate is at an all-time high in America. What a fantastic thought to know that more and more Americans are opening up their front doors saying, "Welcome to my home." You see, this administration understands that when you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

In this time of change, there's some things won't change: our belief in liberty and opportunity and in the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity; the individual values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity; the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families, our schools, our religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of Government.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundation of society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench. We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. This culture of ours is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each

of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you are responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you are responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

I'm seeking the vote because I want to continue to rally the armies of compassion for the next 4 years. I understand the strength of this country is the hearts and souls of the American people, and I know—and I know that by rallying the great strength of America, we can change our society one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time.

For all Americans, these years in our history will stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. It's a time that requires firm resolve, strong belief in the values that have made our country great.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. As John mentioned, on September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. It's a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." I remember—I remember working the ropeline, thanking people, and a fellow grabbed me. He had bloodshot eyes. He had been searching the rubble for somebody that he had worked with, and he said, "Do not let me down."

He took that day personally. All the workers took it personally. I know you took it personally, and so do I. I have a duty that goes on. I wake up every morning thinking about how to best protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

We've come through much together. We've done a lot of hard work. There's more work to be done over the next 4 years. We will spread ownership and opportunity to every corner of America. During the next 4

years, we'll pass the enduring values of our country on to another generation. During the next 4 years, we will continue to lead the world to spread freedom and peace.

Four years ago, I traveled this great country asking for the vote. I made a pledge to my fellow Americans that if you honored me with this great responsibility, I would uphold the dignity and the honor of the office to which I have been elected, so help me God. And with your help, I will do so for the next 4 years.

Thanks for coming. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:22 p.m. at Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum. In his remarks, he referred to Arizona Secretary of State Janice K. Brewer; Arizona State Treasurer David A. Petersen; professional baseball player Luis Gonzalez and his wife, Christine; professional golfer Tom Lehman; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission).

Remarks to the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America in Las Vegas, Nevada

August 12, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you all very much. Thank you all very much for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's good to be back here in Nevada.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Thank you. I want to thank Doug and the good folks here in this training facility for welcoming us. I appreciate your smart work and your hard work and your dedication to helping our fellow citizens gain the skills necessary to be able to find work.

And I just want to talk a little bit about the importance of education, but the reason I'm so grateful that the Carpenters have been so hospitable here is that this is an example of what works. That's what we're interested in in life; we're interested in finding things that work and heralding them. And I want to thank Doug for your leadership.

I'm not the only Bush who's recently been in Las Vegas. You might remember my wife

was back here recently. She went on the Leno show the next night. [Laughter] She said something along the lines, what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. [Laughter] I was interested in hearing her say that. [Laughter]

She's doing great, by the way. I was a lucky fellow when she said yes. And she's a wonderful First Lady and great mom. I'm going to meet up with her here in a little bit to continue our journey throughout the West.

Really what I'm doing is traveling around, letting the people know that I'm interested in earning your vote. I really believe that a person running for office—I'm also interested in letting people know I've got more to do to make this country a better place, a stronger place, and a safer place. And I appreciate the chance to come and talk about my vision for the future of this country here.

I want to thank Doug, and I also want to thank his brother Mike. I'm not sure which one of them is prettier. [Laughter] But they're both smart, and they're both good Americans.

I want to thank Dale Shoemaker for his leadership here. I want to thank Doug Banes and Andy Silins, Bill Irwin. These are all folks who make this facility work well—appreciate your hospitality. It's great to meet the workers from all around our country.

I went to the facility next door where Doug and his folks are training people how to work on these big GE engines, and there's people from Fort Smith, Arkansas, and southern Indiana, and a fellow from McAllen, Texas. People from all around the country are here to gain the skills necessary to be able to work and put food on the table. And again, that's why I'm here. This is a program that works.

I want to thank my friend the Governor, Kenny Guinn, for coming out to say hello. I appreciate him being here. Congressman Jon Porter—he's a good fellow, a really good fellow, and I appreciate him coming out. Congressman Jim Gibbons—he's from northern Nevada.

I know we got members of the Nevada National Guard, First Squadron, 221st Cavalry. I appreciate you being here. Thanks for your service.

I told you one of the things I'm working on is to make the country a better country. See, I know the strength of the country is

the hearts and souls of the citizens. Right here in Nevada, you've got a lot of loving citizens who are willing to help neighbors in need.

When I landed today, I met a fellow named Mike Peschl. Where are you, Mike? There he is. Thank you for coming, Mike. Here's what Mike does. Mike has now worked on his 34th home for Habitat for Humanity. It is a—he spends every Saturday at a Habitat building site. What he is doing is helping to transform America one heart and one soul at a time. He knows what I know, that there's nothing better at a Habitat site to work with the eventual homeowner. And that accomplishes two things. One, it shows somebody, somebody cares about them. That's what Mike works—Mike is loving a neighbor like he'd like to be loved himself. You know what else it does? It encourages an ownership society in America. We want more people owning things. We want more people owning their own home in this country.

We'll continue rallying the armies of compassion all across the country. See, I understand Government can hand out money, but it cannot put hope in a person's heart or sense of purpose in a person's life. That's done when people have heard a call and are willing to put an arm around somebody who is lonely or hurts or is addicted and says, "I love you, brother or sister. What can I do to help you?" America will change. America will change one soul at a time.

The stronger America is an America where people can find work. And I was obviously concerned about our country after a recession. That means people weren't working. It means we were going backwards.

Of course, we started to recover from that recession, and then we got attacked, and that hurt our economy. Make no mistake about it, the attacks of September the 11th hurt. We had some corporate scandals. That hurt. And we've got people who don't tell the truth, it begins to shake the confidence of our economy. We dealt with these situations. I'm going to talk a little bit about the war later on, but we passed laws that say to our corporate citizens, "You will be held to account if you do not tell the truth to your shareholders and your employees."

We've overcome the obstacles. You know why? We've got great workers. We've got productive, hard-working people in America. We've overcome these obstacles because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, the small-business sector of our economy is alive and well. We have overcome these obstacles because our farmers and ranchers are good. We've overcome these obstacles because we refuse to be intimidated. The spirit of America is strong, and our economy is strong as well.

I also believe one of the reasons that we have overcome these obstacles is because we provided well-timed tax relief to the small businesses and the workers of America. If a construction worker has got more money in his pocket, he's going to demand an additional good or a service. And when they demand that additional good or a service, somebody has to produce the good or a service. And when somebody produces a good or a service, somebody is more likely to keep a job or find work. That's how the economy works. That's why the tax relief was important.

We also helped people with families. If you're working and you've got a child, we helped you raise that child by raising the child credit. If you're married, we helped you with the marriage penalty. Let me—it's a backward Tax Code, isn't it, when you penalize marriage? We ought to be encouraging marriage in our country.

We helped our small businesses.

Listen, this economy is strong, it's getting stronger, there's still work to be done. I mean, think about it, the unemployment rate in this State is at 4.2 percent. People are working in Nevada. People can make a living in this State. National unemployment rate is at 5.5 percent. We're the strongest economy in the world amongst industrialized nations.

But there's more to do. In order to keep jobs here at home, we need an energy policy in America to make us less dependent on foreign sources of energy. In order to keep jobs at home, we ought to be confident about our ability to compete in the world.

There's some economic isolationists that want to wall us off. I think that's a mistake. Listen, we've opened up our markets. It's good for American consumers when there's

more products coming in for people to choose from. That's how you get better quality at better price. What I'm asking is for other countries to treat us the way we treat them, because we can compete with anybody, anyplace, anywhere in the world.

In order to make sure jobs stay here, we got to have health care policies that make it more affordable for people to have health insurance. Most small businesses have trouble affording health insurance. Large businesses are fine. It's the small-business sector that is having trouble providing health insurance for our fellow citizens. And therefore, I think small businesses ought to be allowed to pool risk across jurisdictional boundaries so they can get the same discounts for health insurance that big companies get.

Listen, we're going to use technology to help change health care to make it more efficient, to cut down on mistakes, and to help control costs. I mean, the health care industry needs to become modernized. It needs to welcome technology so that it can be a more efficient deliverer of services. We've got to make sure that the patient and doctor are central to the decisionmaking processes in health care, not Federal bureaucrats. That's why I'm for health savings accounts, which are important.

We'll make sure the Medicare modernization bill I signed works, gives seniors choices and prescription drug coverage. We'll continue to provide community health centers for the poorest of our citizens. And to make sure that health care is available and affordable, we need medical liability reform. You know what I'm talking about in Nevada when it comes to medical liability reform. [*Laughter*] You've seen the costs of frivolous lawsuits. Ask your small-business neighbor what it's like to try to provide health care when the costs are going up because of these frivolous lawsuits. Ask your neighbors what it's like when there's a threat of lawsuit. That's why we need tort reform as well. These are practical ways to make sure this economy grows.

And finally, to make sure this economy grows and continues to grow, we need to be wise about how we spend your money in Washington and keep your taxes low. Just be careful—all I ask you is be careful about all

this talk about taxing the rich. You know how that goes. The so-called rich hire accountants and lawyers to maybe not pay as much and, therefore, in order to meet all these promises, guess who gets to end up stuck with the bill?

Audience member. We do.

The President. The working people. Be careful of this language. We've heard it before in American politics.

Now, one of the reasons I'm here is because I understand the importance of education when it comes to making sure our workers are able to find jobs. Doug's outfit has been really innovative. In other words, what he says is, is that, "We got the skilled workers. We got hard-working people, and now we want to match their desire to work and their skills with the jobs which actually exist." That's why we went and saw the—these big turbine-driven engines. People are looking for workers, people who know these engines. And so that's what the apprenticeship program was all about and the skill training programs are all about. It's the practical use of people's time so that people can do what they want to do, which is work. And my attitude is, is that we ought to listen carefully to the strategy employed by this union and implement it at places like our community colleges as well.

See, there are a lot of people who want to work but the jobs, the nature of the jobs are changing. These jobs are changing. And therefore, they need help. They need a little extra education to be able to fill the new jobs. I think, for example, of meeting with textile workers. Their jobs left, but there's enough Government money to pay for the reeducation. And now they're in the health care field, and they're making more money in the new job after getting some additional education.

That's what Doug understands, a little added value. If you help somebody with some extra training, they become more productive. And more productive workers makes more money. And so the Federal Government ought to be wise about how we use taxpayers' money, and that includes providing training at community colleges for people who want to work and need new skills to fill the jobs of the 21st century.

So I've laid out a plan to double the number of workers that get reeducated, find additional skills so they can make more money. They've got to have innovative training accounts. They need less bureaucracy. If you look at the workforce training programs in the Government, if you put an objective look on them, you'll find that a lot of money goes to bureaucracy and not enough goes to the workers. And that's what we want to focus on. We want to focus on the people who we're trying to help. We want to make sure that—I believe we ought to increase our budgets for these training programs, and we'll call upon—continue to call upon Congress to do so, because it's money well-spent. See, I think the role of Government is to help people help themselves. And one way to do so is through good valid education programs, just like they do here at this site.

Doug was telling me he went over to the Labor Department to tell them what-for, I guess, or at least to give them a little nudge in the right direction. But I appreciate that. The reason I bring that up is I do think it's very important to work with people like Doug and the union here, to help people understand that we need a million new jobs to fill the construction jobs over the next decade. And that's a challenge all of us have got to work on together.

We've got to make it clear there are jobs available. That's why these job fair hosts need to be notified about the opportunities available for our citizens. That's why we need guidance counselors to understand. That's why the Governors, like Kenny, must understand that there are great career opportunities available for people in the construction field, and that there's also an opportunity for these good people to be able to be trained and get the skills necessary, like right here at this union hall.

The other thing we've got to do is make sure our kids learn early, before it's too late. Listen, when I got up there, there was—too many of the kids were being shuffled from grade to grade without the skills necessary to succeed. It's time somebody said, "Let's stop this practice. For the sake of our future, let's make sure we raise the standards and hold people accountable in our public schools." We did. We've increased funding

at the Federal level for public schools by some 49 percent since 2001. But now we're asking some questions like, "Is the money being well-spent? Can you read? Can you write? Can you add and subtract?" Seems like legitimate questions to ask. And if not, here is extra help to make sure our children can read, write, add and subtract—early, before it is too late.

There is more work to do to make sure a high school diploma means something. There is more work to do for intervention programs in junior high, for example. And there is more work to do to spend money to encourage our children in math and science, because the truth of the matter is, for example, those 1 million construction jobs are going to require a higher level skill than ever before. And our schools must lay the foundation to help these folks with the jobs of the 21st century. That's what we're talking about, and that's the kind of education program that makes sense. That's why I'm at this facility. Education is the best way to make sure we keep jobs right here in America.

I want to talk about a couple more issues before I want to spend a little time on how to secure the country and make the world a more peaceful place. But I do want to talk about two issues related here to Nevada. One, water. I was raised in Midland, Texas. *[Applause]* There you go. *[Laughter]* Remember what it was like out there? No water. I understand how precious water is. People in Nevada understand how precious water is. And there is a role for the Federal Government. For example, there is a role for the Federal Government to resolve disputes like the Colorado River water dispute.

I instructed Gale Norton, my Secretary of the Interior, to work with all parties to develop innovative strategies, to develop conservation plans to help meet Nevada's water needs. And there is an agreement in place. After years of discussion and adherence to the status quo, we've got an agreement. What I'm telling you is, is that we see problems, and this administration works to solve them. We see problems—*[applause]*.

Last summer we launched what's called Water 2025 initiative. Gale is a Westerner, by the way; she understands water needs. She understands the problems in the West. She understands there's competing interests for scarce water. This program promotes conservation, as I mentioned. It expands the use of voluntary water markets. It provides advanced technology, like automated pumping and canal controls. It funds research into new technologies to better deliver water and conserve resources. In other words, it is a comprehensive strategy to deal with a problem that needs to be dealt with.

And we look forward to working with the States and the local authorities to better safeguard this precious resource. I know the mayor of Henderson is with us today. Mr. Mayor, we will listen to you. And I know Kenny will listen to you. This is an effort where we've all got to work together to bring the stakeholders in place so the people of this part of the world will have water not only today but in future years.

And we're spending money. My budget for Water 2025 more than doubles the \$8.4 million that had been spent to date to \$21 million. I mean, we're beginning an effort to make sure that the people of this part of the world understand how precious your resource is and how best to not only conserve it and use it but to develop it in a way that will enable your quality of life to continue on.

The other issue, of course, I want to talk about is Yucca Mountain. This is a vital question, and we need to keep facts, not politics, at the center of the debate. It's an issue that's been developing for a while. Since the 1987 congressional vote to focus exclusively on Yucca Mountain, Presidents have considered this issue, as did I. And when I campaigned here in this State, I said I would make a decision based upon science, not politics. I said I would listen to the scientists, those involved with determining whether or not this project could move forward in a safe manner. And that's exactly what I did. I listened to the people who know the facts and know the science, and made a decision.

Now, I've listened also, as well, to your Governor and Senator Ensign and to the Congressmen and to your fine Attorney Gen-

eral. They didn't agree with my decision. I understand that. They made themselves very clear. And I said, "Well, I appreciate your opinion, but I will—I'll tell you what I will do. I will allow this process to be appealed to the courts and to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and I will stand by the decision of the courts and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission."

Now, my opponent is trying to turn Yucca Mountain into a political poker chip. [*Laughter*] He says he's strongly against Yucca here in Nevada, but he voted for it several times. And so did his runningmate. My point to you is that, if they're going to change, one day they may change again. [*Laughter*] I think we need—I think you need straight talk on this issue. I think you need somebody who is going to do what he says he's going to do.

Let me talk about one other subject. I know it's on your mind—it's clearly on my mind—and that's how best to secure our country. We—they're—first of all, no President wants to be a war President. That was my last choice. And the enemy attacked us, and we got to respond.

I'm going to share some lessons about September the 11th: first, the nature of the people that attacked us. I tell people that you cannot negotiate with these folks. You cannot reason with them. Their hearts are so filled with hatred, they're willing to take innocent life * like that. These are people that—they only understand one thing, and that is force and justice. And that's what they will get. We will pursue them wherever they exist. [*Applause*] Thank you all.

See, I understand we must pursue them overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. I understand. The second lesson is that this is a different kind of war than we were used to, and this is a shadowy network of cold-blooded killers that can hide in cities around the world where they can find safe haven. And therefore, in order to better secure America, we not only needed to say to them that we will bring you to justice, but we needed to say to their allies and people willing to harbor them, or feed them, or hide

* At this point, the President snapped his fingers.

them that you're just as guilty as those who came and killed the people in America.

And when America speaks, it better mean what it says. And so when I said to the Taliban, "Give them up, or face serious consequences," I meant exactly what I said. And today the world is safer and America is safer because Afghanistan has been liberated from the Taliban. I want you—just think about this—in less than 4 years' time, Afghanistan has gone from a brutal dictatorship that denied many young girls the right to go to school, that was more than willing to drag their moms or women into the public square and whip them and, in some cases, kill them, to a society in which over 8 million people have registered to vote. They're going to have Presidential elections in October. Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror.

Another lesson of September the 11th is that when we see a threat, we must take it seriously before it fully materializes. That is a vital lesson. It's a change, obviously, of doctrine because prior to 9/11, we used to think, "Well, gosh, if we saw a threat, we're safe anyway. It may affect somebody somewhere else, but it surely can't affect America." That's what changed on that fateful day. And it's really important for our country to understand it. I want you to know I clearly understand that.

And so, therefore, when we looked at—when we looked around the world and saw threats, we began to act in a different fashion. Now, look, I want—I would like to deal with all threats diplomatically. That's the first choice. The use of our military is the last option. And so we saw a threat with Saddam Hussein. You say, "Why did you see a threat?" Of course, we looked at intelligence and saw a threat, but we also remembered the nature of the regime of Saddam Hussein. He used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorist organizations—Abu Nidal's organization. This is the guy that killed Leon Klinghoffer. He's a known terrorist, killed an American. He's in and out of Iraq. Actually, he received safe harbor in Iraq.

Now, Zarqawi's network—he's the people—he's the guy now—he just beheads people like that to try to shake our will and our conscience. Saddam Hussein paid the fami-

lies of suiciders. You know, paying people whose loved one goes and kills somebody is a part of a terrorist act. He is a dangerous man. He was shooting at our pilots.

We had been to war with Saddam Hussein before. And he was a source of instability. And so I looked at the intelligence. Now remember, the United States Congress—I thought it was important to bring the Congress—get Congress involved with this very important matter. They understood the stakes. They looked at the intelligence. They remembered the nature of Saddam Hussein. Members of both political parties stood up and said, "We support the President, if he has to use force, in using force"—including my opponent.

It looked like for a while he was trying to squirm out of that vote. *[Laughter]* The other day, he said that knowing what we know today, he still—he agreed that the use of force in Iraq was necessary. I welcome that clarification. *[Laughter]* He's still got 82 days left in the campaign, though. *[Laughter]*

I went to the United Nations. See, I—as I told you, I think diplomacy should be tried first. And I went to the United Nations, and the U.N. Security Council voted 15 to nothing that said to the tyrant, "Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences." And so the world was once again saying to Saddam, "You're a threat." Everybody recognized that in the post-9/11 world that a threat needed to be dealt with. He defied the world, as he had done for over a decade. He systematically deceived the inspectors. Remember, we sent inspectors in to try to find the truth, and they were systematically deceived. That's the reality. And so after a period of time, I had a choice to make. Tony Blair had a choice to make. Other leaders had choices to make. And that is, do we forget the lessons of the modern world and hope for the best and hope that Saddam Hussein all of a sudden miraculously changes his attitude about America and terrorism and weapons, or do we take action necessary to defend ourselves and to spread freedom and peace? And given that choice, I will take action every time.

Knowing what we know today—no, I thought we were going to find stockpiles; everybody did. But he had the capability of making weapons. And if the world had

turned away from watching Saddam, that capability could have been passed on to terrorist enemies. It's a risk we could not afford to take. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision, and the world is better off for it. The world is better off for it. Because America has led, the world is safer.

We put together a great coalition. Over the next 4 years, I'll continue to work with our friends and allies. If you think about Afghanistan, there's nearly 40 nations there. If you think about Iraq, with allies and friends—Japan, South Korea, Great Britain, the Dutch, the Danes, Poles—countries all around the world understand what we know, that free societies are peaceful societies. They understand the stakes. They know what's really important. But I'll assure you, I'll never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries.

I also want to say to the loved ones who are here, those whose loved one wear a uniform, the Government has an obligation to your husbands, wives, sons, or daughters to make sure you've got all—your loved one has all he or she needs to fulfill the mission. That's an important part of this debate. And I would ask you to ask your fellow citizens to remember what happened when I submitted a supplemental funding request to the United States Congress in September of last year. It was an \$87 billion request for more body armor and fuel and spare parts and ammunition, money necessary so that we could complete our missions. And it was overwhelmingly approved by the Congress. Members of both parties supported it; my opponent didn't. And he gave this explanation, he said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." [Laughter] I think you need somebody who speaks plainly and honors our commitment—honors the commitment of our Government to those who wear our uniform. And that \$87 billion was necessary.

I believe these are historic times. I believe history—historians will look back and say this was a really important period. This is a time where we need firm resolve and clear vision about the stakes. But not only must we stay on the offense to protect our country and not only make sure our homeland defenses

are wise and the strategies are good and the people are well-compensated—and you've just got to know a lot of people are working hard to protect us—but we've got to also take on another mission, and that is to deal with the conditions that give rise to terrorism.

So there's a long-term strategy, and it's spreading freedom. We, in America, understand that liberty can be a transforming power for societies. If you've got a loved one in Iraq—does anybody here have a loved one in Iraq? You do? Thank you. [Applause] Let me—I appreciate that. I want you to know that your loved one is serving the country and the world in a powerful way. Not only—as I said, we'll defeat people there so we don't have to face them here, but a free Iraq in the midst of the Middle East is going to be a transforming event. This is a part of the world where people—the people are desperate for freedom. This is a part of the world where people—they're frustrated, the deep resentments because they're not free. We in America believe everybody deserves to be free. We believe it's the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman on Earth—freedom.

And therefore, I want you all to know that the long-term consequences of a free Iraq will make our children safer; it will make the children in other parts of the world safer as well. It's going to—this is—these are transforming times.

I'll tell you an interesting story—at least I think it is. I was having lunch with the Prime Minister of Japan—a dinner with him, and he's a friend of mine. And there I was sitting down with the head of a country that my dad fought against, and I'm sure some of your dads fought against him too. He was an enemy, and he represented a country which was an enemy of our country. We lost a lot of lives in World War II because we fought each other. And after World War II, my predecessor and others understood, however, that a country could be transformed by liberty, by the habits of liberty. And they stuck to their guns. They didn't listen to the critics and the pessimists. And eventually, Japan became a self-governing nation where the people were free.

And therefore, the discussion had changed over a period of time, hadn't it, from one

where there was war, and Prime Minister Koizumi and I were now discussing peace. We were discussing how best we could deal together with Kim Chong-il and his nuclear weapons ambitions. We were talking about the peace. This country loves peace. I want there to be a peaceful world. But I was able to have that conversation in large part because after World War II, there was a strategy to help our enemies become free countries. Someday, an American President will be sitting down with an elected leader from Iraq, talking about the peace, talking about how to make the world a more peaceful place.

That's what's at stake. And that's why it's really important for us to complete the mission. There's a lot of people watching America right now. They're wondering whether or not we've got what it takes to complete the mission. They hear things like, "Well, I'm going to substantially reduce our troops in 6 months." That's a bad signal, as far as I'm concerned. It's a signal that says all the enemy has to do is wait us out. It means that the Iraqis who are worried about their future—after all, what they don't want to do is go back to the day where a tyrant could come and summarily execute them if he felt like it; therefore, they're afraid to take risks for peace. So they kind of say, "Well, I wonder whether or not this country really means what it says." It's essential that when America speaks, it means what it says, and that we should not be sending mixed signals to allies and enemy alike.

We will succeed—we will succeed. You know why we're going to succeed? One, we do have what it takes.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. We do have what it takes. We've got the vision and the courage and the willingness to serve a great cause. The other reason we'll succeed is because people want to be free. People from all walks of life want to be free. Mothers and dads in Iraq want to raise their children in a peaceful environment, just like moms and dads here in America do. People long for peace. They want peace. They've got peace in their hearts. They long for a world where—that is a decent world. And that stands in stark contrast to the enemy. And we've been called—

Audience member. You rock, Mr. President! [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you, sir. Let me finish by one story that is a compelling story. I've told it several times here on this trip and out on the road. It's the story about the time seven Iraqi citizens came to see me in the Oval Office. The Oval Office is a powerful place. It's—you know, people walk in and just get overwhelmed by the majesty of this shrine to democracy. I do, on a daily basis. And the only person I know that didn't was my mother, who walked in and continued to tell me what to do. Anyway—[*laughter*]
—that's a cheap shot, I know.

Anyway, the seven men come in. They—they're Iraqi citizens. All seven had had their right hands cut off by Saddam Hussein because the currency—his currency had devalued and he needed to blame somebody. And one fellow explained to me why him, and it was because he had sold dinars to buy, I think he said euros or dollars to buy gold so he could then manufacture jewelry. He was a small merchant. And so he picks these seven guys out and cuts their right hands off. And then burns an X in their foreheads and charges them for the operation.

Fortunately, a documentary was made of the plights of these people. And a guy in Houston, Texas, saw it. He was a successful person who believed that you have a duty in life to help others, and flew these seven men over to Houston where they were fitted with new hands. And it was shortly thereafter that they came to see me. And it was—I'm telling you, it was a powerful moment to see the stark contrast between a society that—where somebody could just summarily say, "I don't like you; I'm going to chop your hand off," and a society full of compassionate people that were willing to heal the hurt by helping these people with a new hand. And that's what we're really working on.

I told these men there, I said, "Come in the Oval Office. I want you to be in a place where the office is bigger than the person." That's what free societies that are stable societies do. They have institutions that are bigger than the people. "And some day," I said to them, "you will have institutions bigger than your people, so that never again can somebody summarily disfigure you."

And that's what we're talking about, really, when you think about it. We're talking about the difference between good and evil. We're talking about the difference between compassion and tyranny. And we're talking about a world in which people are able to realize their hopes and dreams and aspirations without fear of brutal tyranny. America will be safer and the world will be better because of the actions we are taking today.

May God bless you all, and may God bless our country. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:02 a.m. at the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America International Training Facility. In his remarks, he referred to Douglas J. McCarron, general president, Douglas J. Banes, general vice president, and Andris J. Siling, general secretary-treasurer, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America; Mike McCarron, executive secretary treasurer, Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters; Dale Shoemaker, senior technical coordinator, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America International Training Facility; William K. Irwin, Jr., executive director, Carpenters International Training Fund; television talk show host Jay Leno; Gov. Kenny C. Guinn of Nevada; Mayor James B. Gibson of Henderson, NV; Nevada State Attorney General Brian Sandoval; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab al Zarqawi; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea.

Remarks With Nancy Reagan in Bel Air, California

August 12, 2004

The President. Laura and I are honored to come by and pay our respects to Mrs. Reagan. We really admire Mrs. Reagan's strength and her love of a great President and her friendship. We really thank you for the tour of your beautiful backyard. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Reagan. I'm so glad you came—so glad you came. Thanks so much.

The President. Thank you.

The First Lady. Thanks so much.

Mrs. Reagan. I'm always happy to see you.

The First Lady. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Reagan. And you met Duchess.

The President. And I met Duchess.

Mrs. Reagan. You met Duchess.

The First Lady. That's right.

The President. Thank you all.

The First Lady. Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:37 p.m. at the Reagan home. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Victory 2004 Dinner in Santa Monica, California

August 12, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. And thanks for having us. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thanks for the warm, warm welcome.

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Thank you. Thank you all. Mine is the only line of work where you get introduced by your wife—[*laughter*—and I'm really glad I did. I can't tell you how proud I am of Laura. She is a fabulous First Lady. I like to tell these folks I've been campaigning with recently, I said I'm going to give you some reasons to put me back in office, but perhaps the most important one of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years. And by the way, it's a joy to campaign with her, and it's a great joy for both of us to campaign with our daughters. It's really been a fun experience for us to have Barbara and Jenna on the campaign trail with us. And it's kind of like the camping trip I never took them on. [*Laughter*]

I'm also proud to be here with the Governor of California. He's a—because he and I share a lot in common. We both married above ourselves—[*laughter*—we both have trouble with the English language—[*laughter*—we both have big biceps—[*laughter*—well, two out of three aren't bad. If I had to put a motto or slogan on Governor Schwarzenegger, I would say he's a guy who got the job done. He came to this important State, and he got the job done. That's how I hope people view me as well—as the President, came to the Capital and got the job done.

This is a part of a western swing that actually started in Florida. [*Laughter*] John

McCain and I were campaigning in Panama City the other day. We had 23,000 people show up, a big crowd for August. Last night in Phoenix, there was about 15,000, 16,000, loud, energetic, enthusiastic people. I'm telling you what I'm seeing. The crowds are big. The enthusiasm is high. We're going to win in November. *[Applause]* Thank you all.

And I want to thank you for your help tonight. This is not the first time we've been out here, by the way, nor is it going to be the last time. I intend to compete in California. I know that Parsky, my man Parsky says, "Don't worry, you're going to win it this time." And I said, "You know what? I think I am." I'm looking forward to coming to this great State. Nobody should take this State for granted in 2004.

I'm running with a good man. And Dick Cheney, you know, I like to tell people he's not the prettiest face on the ticket. *[Laughter]* I didn't pick him for his looks. *[Laughter]* I picked him because he can do the job. I picked him because of his experience. I picked him because of his sound advice.

I want to thank my friend Brad Freeman. I'm thankful for the fact he didn't introduce me. *[Laughter]* But I love him like a brother. And I thank you all for coming too.

Rabbi Hier, I want to thank you for your outstanding prayer. I got up after he offered that prayer and said I want a copy of it. It was really strong. What a fine man Rabbi Hier is. What a sweet, fine man. Roland said, "That's my rabbi." I said I can understand why.

I want to thank all the Congressmen who are here, Ed Royce and Ken Calvert and Chris Cox and Dana Rohrabacher. These are fine Members of the United States Congress, good, hard-working, decent people. I see Riordan is here—Mr. Secretary, I'm glad you're here, glad you finally found work. *[Laughter]* Remember the last job I tried to give you, but—Ambassador to Chad. But he didn't want it. *[Laughter]*

I'm glad the next Senator from California, Bill Jones, is with us. I appreciate you, Senator.

I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds, who has helped raise money all across the country. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's an entrepreneur, a business guy, former

partner of the Texas Rangers who said, "How can I help?" I said, "Why don't you lead the efforts to make sure we're well-funded." And he has done a fabulous job. I appreciate you being here, friend. Finally, I want to thank my friend Gerry Parsky and Robin for being here as well and being such great friends.

Listen, I'm here to ask for the vote. I'm traveling the country letting the people know that I've got a reason to be your President for 4 more years. I've got a reason to run for office. I want this country to be a safer country, a stronger country, and a better country for every one of our citizens.

And we've done a lot. You know, this country has come through a lot, and we've accomplished a lot. But there's only one reason to look backward, and that's to determine who best can lead us forward. I'm traveling the country talking about what more we can do to make this country the best country it can possibly be. I have more work to do on behalf of the American people. We've got more work to do to make sure our public schools work well.

You might remember, when I came to office, the system was such that it just shuffled the kids through grade after grade, year after year, without teaching them the basics. And I went to Washington to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. And so we changed the attitude toward our public schools, at least in the Nation's Capital. We've now raised the bar. We've said we expect results, show us whether or not the children can read and write and add and subtract. If they can't, we'll fix the problems early. The whole goal is to make sure that not one single child is left behind in America. And we're making progress—we're making progress.

We've laid the foundation for excellence. You know, there's a lot of talk in these campaigns about funding. We've increased funding by—for elementary and secondary education by 49 percent. We've increased funding since 2001 by 52 percent for Title I. But that's part of the issue. The other issue is, are we actually getting the job done? Are the schools functioning the way they're supposed to function? And if not, we're demanding change. When we find kids trapped in schools that will not teach and will not

change, this administration is calling for change.

There's more to do. We've got intervention programs in junior high and high school to make sure, at the very minimum, our kids can read. A high school diploma must mean something, so we've got a plan to restructure our high schools in a more effective way. We want to make sure the Internet is in our classrooms to bring the latest technology for our kids. What I'm telling you is, over the next 4 years, our children will gain the skills and confidence ready to succeed in the 21st century.

There's more to do. There's more to do for health care. You might remember the Medicare debate. President after President, Congress after Congress said, "Oh, don't worry, we'll strengthen Medicare," and yet, Medicare was not meeting the needs of our seniors. We pay \$100,000 for heart surgery, but not the medicines necessary to prevent the heart surgery from the first place. We got a job done. We worked with the Congress to strengthen Medicare. Seniors will now have a choice. Seniors will have prescription drug coverage. Poor seniors will be helped. There's a lot of talk in Washington, but this administration, like Arnold Schwarzenegger in California, is getting the job done.

We've expanded low-income—we've expanded community health centers for low-income Americans. We've established what's called health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their health needs. We need more to do. We've got to make sure we bring technology into the health care industry to save money and to cut down on medical errors. I'll tell you what else we need to do. We need medical liability reform in the Nation's Capital now. You cannot be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-trial-lawyer the same time. You have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. I made my choice. I'm going to continue the Congress to get medical liability reform.

In all we do to improve health care in America, we will make sure that the health decisions are made between the doctor and the patient, not made by Government officials in Washington, DC.

There's more to do on our economy. Just remember what we've been through in this

country. We've been through a recession and stock market decline. We've been through a corporate scandal. We've been through terrorist attacks. And yet our economy is strong and getting stronger. I believe the reasons why is because the American people refuse to fold. I also know the reason why is because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong. The role of Government is not to create wealth; the role of Government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish.

And part of making sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong, we cut taxes. We needed tax relief in order to get out of the recession we're in. When people have more money of their own in their pocket, they're going to demand an additional good or a service, and when they demand that additional good or a service, somebody in our system is going to produce it. The tax relief we passed is working. The economy is growing. More jobs are being added, and there is more work to do.

I'm running because I understand, in order to keep jobs here in America, America must be the best place in the business—in the world to do business. Now, what does that mean? That means tort reform. It means letting small businesses pool risk when it comes to health care so they can buy more affordable insurance just like big businesses do. It means an energy policy that is less dependent on foreign sources of energy to keep jobs here. It means having a trade policy that is confident in our capacity to compete. We ought to be opening markets around the world. My view is American entrepreneurs and manufacturers and small-business people and farmers and ranchers can compete with anybody, anytime, anyplace so long as the rules are fair.

You know what else it means? It means we better have an education system that encourages workers to gain the skills necessary for the jobs of the 21st century. I have been traveling our country a lot. I remember going to North Carolina where textile mills had moved overseas. And, of course, there was despondency there. But our Government provided help for those workers so they could go back to community colleges to train for the jobs which actually now exist in North Carolina. And when a worker becomes more

productive as a result of more education, they make more money. People are finding new jobs in this changing economy of ours, and a proper role for Government is to provide job training which works.

I'm running for a reason. I want people finding work in this country. I want more small businesses flourishing. I want to continue this fantastic story of homeownership in America. Do you realize the homeownership rate in our country is at the highest rate ever? I love the fact that more and more people from all walks of life are opening their front door and saying, "Welcome to my home."

After 4 years, America's economy will still lead the industrialized world. After 4 years, people will get better paying jobs. And after 4 years, more people will be able to realize their dream and say, "This is my business, and I'm expanding it."

The next 4 years also require diligence when it comes to foreign policy. If America shows weakness or uncertainty in this world, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

You know, our world changed on September the 11th. And since that day, we have led and the world has changed. Just think about this. Prior to September the 11th, Afghanistan was a home base of Al Qaida. Al Qaida was training there. They trained thousands of killers and sent them around the world in secret cells, including our own country. Because we acted, because we were firm and with resolve, Afghanistan is now free. Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. In Afghanistan, young girls now go to school for the first time.

The other day I was in Cleveland, Ohio, for the International Children's Game, and I had kicked off the games. They had all these kids out in front from all around the world. Right there in my vision was the Afghan girls soccer team. It was a fantastic feeling. I can't tell you how proud I was of our country. We believe in freedom and liberty.

Remember, before September the 11th, Pakistan was a transit point for Al Qaida. Today, Pakistan is a strong ally in the war on terror, and America and the world are safer for it.

Prior to September the 11th, Libya was a country that had designs on weapons of mass destruction. Because we acted, because we were clear in our resolve, Muammar Qadhafi got the message, dismantled his weapons programs. America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Saddam Hussein was the sworn enemy of America. Remember, Saddam Hussein's history. He defied the world, resolution after resolution after resolution. He was firing weapons at our pilots when our pilots were trying to enforce the world's sanctions. Saddam Hussein had used weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein paid the families of suicide bombers. Saddam Hussein harbored terrorists. Remember Abu Nidal? He killed Leon Klinghoffer. His organization was given safe harbor in Iraq. Zargawi, the person who'd just behead somebody because he feels like it, trying to intimidate the free world, had been given safe haven in Iraq. Saddam Hussein killed thousands of his own citizens. He was a threat in a volatile part of the world.

We saw a threat in Saddam Hussein. After September the 11th, America must deal with threats before they fully materialize. I made a decision to go to the United States Congress to seek a resolution of support in case we needed to use force in Iraq. I say "in case we needed to use force in Iraq"; the use of force should be the last option of the President of the United States. It certainly is in my case. And so I went to the Congress, and they looked at the facts as we saw them and looked at the intelligence as I saw it. And they agreed with me that Saddam Hussein was a threat—"they" being members of both political parties, looked at the same intelligence—including my opponent, who looked at the very same intelligence.

I went to the United Nations. I think it's very important for our country to try to solve problems and deal with threat diplomatically as a first resort. So I went to the U.N. I asked them to take a serious look at Saddam Hussein as a threat to the world. I described how threats in the post-September-the-11th era must be looked at in a new light. They agreed. You might remember, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution 15 to nothing that said, "Saddam Hussein,

disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences.” The world spoke with one voice, and yet, once again, he defied the world. Remember, we thought weapons inspectors were a good idea. And yet, he systematically deceived the weapons inspectors. He wasn’t about to disclose. And as he had for year after year after year, he basically said there’s no consequences. So I had a choice to make at this point in time: to forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust a madman, or take action to defend our country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

You know, even though we didn’t find the stockpiles that everybody thought we would find, Saddam had the capability to make weapons. And in a post-September-the-11th era, the thought of him having that capacity and that capability and the thought of him being able to pass that capability on to our enemies, our sworn enemies who had the willingness to kill thousands in one attack, was a threat we had to deal with. Knowing what I know today, I would have still made the same decision.

And now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and almost 220 days after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent found a—what I call a new nuance. [*Laughter*] He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. After months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, Senator Kerry agrees with me that even though we did not find the stockpiles of weapons that we all believed were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power. I’m glad he cleared that up. [*Laughter*] The only problem is there’s 80 more days for him to change his mind. [*Laughter*]

I’m running because there’s more to do to defend our country. We’re—we will work with our friends and allies to pursue these terrorists around the world. Listen, it’s better to defeat them there than to face them here in our own country. I know you cannot talk sense to these people. There’s the—you can’t negotiate with them. You cannot hope for the best. It is essential that we be firm and resolved and steady and stay on the offense against people who would do us harm.

And the way—we will, of course, continue to work with our friends and allies. We’ve got a vast coalition in support of our goals. Sixty nations are involved with Proliferation Security Initiative. There’s 40 nations involved in Afghanistan. Nearly 30 nations are involved in Iraq. I thank their leaders all the time. I appreciate so very much the families of those soldiers who are working side by side with our soldiers to bring peace and freedom to the world with their great contributions. I have an obligation to continue building and strengthening alliances, which I will do. But I will never turn over America’s national security decisions to leaders of other foreign countries.

I’m really proud of our military. Our military has helped us to keep our commitments. We must keep our commitments to our military. That’s why, last September, I proposed supplemental funding to support our troops who are in combat in both Afghanistan and Iraq. This money was for body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. It was an important piece of legislation. We received great bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate. As a matter of fact, only 12 Senators voted against that vital funding for our troops, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

When questioned about that vote, I found it interesting that he said this: “I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it.” [*Laughter*] End quote. [*Laughter*] He got pressured more, and he went on to say he was proud to vote, then he said the whole thing was a complicated matter. There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We’ve got to work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, and that’s poverty and hopelessness and resentment. The best way to do that is to spread freedom. We believe that liberty can change people for the better.

I oftentimes tell the story about visiting with Prime Minister Koizumi, a good friend of mine. Laura and I were having dinner with him one night in Tokyo. And it dawned on me that it was amazing that here is the leader of America and the leader of Japan sitting

around the table talking about peace. What's amazing is that we were enemies not all that long ago. As a matter of fact, my dad, and I'm sure many of your dads, fought against the Japanese people, bitter enemies. Fortunately, after World War II, my predecessor and others in positions of responsibility in Washington believed that liberty could change Japan for the better. They defied the critics and the pessimists and said, "Let's help build a self-governing society based upon the principles of liberty." And as a result of being—having such a heartfelt belief in the fact that liberty can change the habits of people, I'm now at the table with a former enemy talking about peace.

And this is what—this is the historic moment we're in in the world today, as far as I'm concerned. I truly believe that someday, an elected Iraqi President will be sitting down—or Prime Minister—will be sitting down with the President of the United States talking about peace, talking about how to make sure our world is a better place.

See, what's happening is, is that freedom is beginning to rise up in a part of the world that is desperate for freedom, a part of the world where people are resentful because they are not free human beings. And we believe that freedom is the Almighty's gift to every person in this world. It is the basic belief of the American system.

And so—I say this to the families of the soldiers I meet. I tell them their sons and daughters or husbands and wives are on an incredibly important mission for history. See, when Iraq is free, it will begin to change the vision of those in Iran who want to be free. When Iraq is free, it will say to the Palestinians, who have been subjected to leadership that has not led in their interest, that it's possible to live at peace with our close friend Israel. Freedom will change the habits of people so that peace prevails in this world.

There are still—you know, there are still enemies who hate us, and they are plotting to harm us—that's the world we live in—and we've got a lot to do here at home to protect us. I'll just give you some thoughts about some statements that have been made about our staying on the offense in the war on terror. My opponent says that going to war with the terrorists is actually improving

their recruiting efforts. I think the logic is upside-down. I think that shows a misunderstanding of the enemy. See, remember, during the nineties, the terrorists were recruiting and training for war with us long before—long before—we went to war with them. They don't need an excuse for their hatred. I think it's wrong to blame our country for the anger and evil of those killers. See, we don't create terrorists by fighting back. We defeat the terrorists by fighting back.

We're starting the hard work of reform. I want to—inside Washington on homeland security. I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here. We put together a new Department of Homeland Security, and they're doing good work. There's a lot of good people working hard on your behalf. The PATRIOT Act is a very important piece of legislation. The PATRIOT Act gives our law enforcement officers the tools necessary to crack terror networks. It is necessary. Congress needs to renew the PATRIOT Act.

We're sharing intelligence better than before. As you recently read, I picked a really good man out of the United States Congress from Florida, Porter Goss, to head the Central Intelligence Agency. I'm looking forward to working with Congress on the creation of the National Intelligence Director. What I'm telling you is our Government understands what we need to do to secure ourselves. I understand, you know, the—we've got to be right 100 percent of the time, the enemy only right once. We should take great comfort that there's people at all levels of government—really decent, honorable people—who are working hard as they possibly can to do their duty and protect our country.

I talked about reforming in Washington. It's never easy to do that. Entrenched interests there are pretty strong. The status quo has got a lot of defenders. But if you think about it, we've gotten good results for the people by pushing hard for reform. See, when it comes to raising standards in schools and insisting on excellence for every child, we're getting the job done. When it comes to reforming Medicare so our seniors have got prescription drugs and insisting that the doctors and the patients are the center of health care decisionmaking, we're getting the job done. When it comes to growing this

economy and creating jobs and enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit, we're getting the job done. When it comes to defending America and spreading freedom and peace, we're getting the job done. What I'm telling you is, when it comes to electing a President, put somebody in office who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you. Listen, the world we're in is a changing world, but there's some things that aren't going to change: our belief in liberty and opportunity and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity. They won't change. In a changing world, the values we try to live by will not change: courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. In a changing world, there are some just very vital institutions: our families and our schools, our religious congregations. These institutions are really important for our country. They deserve the respect of Government.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of our society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and each person counts. We stand for judges who strictly interpret the law, not legislate from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in this country. The culture is changing; slowly but surely it's changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in this community, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And I believe a central tenet of a responsibility society is, each of us should love our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

You know, for all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of this Nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. It's a time we need firm re-

solve and clear vision. This is a time we must stick to those ideals which make this country such a fabulous country.

You know, I'll never forget the day I went into the ruins of the Twin Towers, September the 14th, 2001. There were workers in hardhats there yelling at me, "Whatever it takes." I can remember walking—working the ropeline there and shaking hands with people, guys with bloodshot eyes, and they'd been in the rubble looking for a buddy. He said, you know, "Mr. President, do not let me down." He took that day personally. Everybody searching through the rubble took it personally. I know you took it personally, and so did I. I have a duty that goes on. Every day I wake up thinking about how to better secure our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

We have done a lot together—we have done a lot together, and we have done the hard work. And there is more hard work to do, and I'm ready for the task. I've got the energy to continue leading this country, and I know where I want to take us. Over the next 4 years, we'll be dedicated to spreading opportunity and ownership to every corner of America. For the next 4 years, we will pass the enduring values of our great land on to another generation. And for the next 4 years, we'll be relentless in our pursuit of freedom and peace.

You know, when I traveled your State 4 years ago and our country, I said if you gave me the high honor of holding this office, the Presidency of the United States, I would uphold the dignity and honor of that office—the pledge I made. With your help over the next 4 years, I will continue to honor that pledge.

Thanks for coming, and may God bless you all. Thank you for your support. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 6:54 p.m. at the Santa Monica Municipal Airport. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady, who introduced the President. In his remarks, the President referred to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Gerald L. Parsky, California State chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc., and his wife, Robin; Brad Freeman, California State finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.;

Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean and founder, Simon Wiesenthal Center; former Mayor Richard J. Riordan of Los Angeles, CA; Mercer Reynolds, Victory national finance chairman, Republican National Committee; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab al Zarqawi; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Remarks on the Columbia River Channel Deepening Project in Portland, Oregon

August 13, 2004

Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Thanks for having me. Laura and I are thrilled to be here. You know, Steve, when you and I spent all that time in the library in college—[laughter]—never did you think you'd be introducing a President. Never did you think it would be me. [Laughter] I'm proud to be with my old classmate, and I'm proud to be here to talk about a really important project for this part of the world. I want to thank you for your stewardship, Steve, and thanks for introducing me.

Today we're going to take an important new step to enhance the vitality of this river and thereby expand opportunities for the people of the Pacific Northwest. Today I'm announcing that we'll soon begin deepening 104 miles of the Columbia River Channel from the mouth of the river on the Pacific to Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington.

By deepening the channel of this river from 40 to 43 feet, we will create new export opportunities at Columbia River ports; we'll help our farmers and ranchers; we'll help our manufacturers remain competitive; we'll protect and restore jobs—really good paying jobs—and we'll help conserve and restore the river ecosystem. This is a vital project. I'm submitting a \$15 million budget amendment to fund the beginning stages of the Columbia River Deepening Project. What I'm telling you is we're committed to keeping the Columbia River open for navigation and trade, and we're committed to keeping America's great ports open for business.

I thank my friend Gordon Smith for his leadership on this important project. I want to thank Senator Patty Murray from the State of Washington for joining us and for working on this project as well. This project needs bipartisan cooperation, and I want to thank the Senators from both parties for joining us. I appreciate Congressman Greg Walden being here as well. And I want to thank my friend George Nethercutt, Congressman from the State of Washington, for joining us as well.

I appreciate the speaker being here.

And somebody told me that former Senator Mark Hatfield is with us today. Senator, how are you? It's great to see you. You're looking great. Mrs. Hatfield, how are you? I'll tell Mother, Antoinette, you're looking good. [Laughter] So is she. [Laughter]

I appreciate J.P. Woodley. He's the Assistant Secretary of Army, the commander and division engineer for this project. I want to thank Brigadier General Don Riley. He's the director of the civil works of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer.

I appreciate Bob Lohn. It's good to see Bob again. Last time I saw Bob, we were talking about salmon restoration. I appreciate you being here. Dave Wesley is the Deputy Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—David Wesley is the Deputy Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Listen, this is a project that requires all aspects of government working together to make sure this happens. I'm not the kind of guy that likes to stand up and say, "This is going to happen," and it doesn't happen. I'm the kind of person who says, "When it's going to happen, it is going to happen." And that's why these Government officials are here, to hear it clearly from the President, we expect this to go forward.

I appreciate the representatives from organized labor who are here. Thank you for coming. Thank you for lending your voice in this important project. I want to thank the Port of Portland. I want to thank the farmers and ranchers who are here. I appreciate what you're doing to feed our country and to help the hungry around the world as well.

Ever since President Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark on their expedition to

the West, the Federal Government has recognized the importance of the Columbia River. This is one of America's vital waterways. It is a key artery of commerce for the Pacific Northwest. I say "key" artery of commerce—that means it's a key for jobs. We want people working. When we say "artery of commerce," that means it's a key for job creation, a chance for people to make a living when this river functions to its maximum potential.

Growers and manufacturers from Oregon and Washington to the Midwest count on the Columbia's deep-draft shipping channel to get their products to the Pacific and then to overseas markets. Last year, more than \$15 billion worth of cargo traveled through the Columbia River ports, including more wheat than America shipped on any other river. If you're a wheat farmer, that's good news. If you're somebody who relies upon wheat to sustain your life, that's also good news.

In all, more than 1,000 businesses, some 40,000 good-paying Pacific Northwest jobs depend on Columbia River shipping. That's why this project is so vital.

Columbia River ports have become some of the busiest on the West Coast, but in recent years, a problem has started to emerge. It seems like to me those of us in government ought to see problems and figure out how to solve them early, before it becomes too late. That's really what we're here talking about, isn't it. The cargo ships that carry crops and other Pacific Northwest products across the Pacific are larger than they used to be, and they depend on deeper navigation waters.

In 1970, the average cargo ship's draft was 25 to 30 feet. Today, it's from 41 to 45 feet. Yet the depth of this river behind me has stayed the same, at 40 feet. That's the problem: It's not deep enough to handle the new ships. And so some shippers are now diverting ocean traffic away from Portland and toward other ports. Because this river is too shallow, the Port of Portland is at a competitive disadvantage. Ultimately, that will hurt the ability for people to find work.

With fewer ships coming into the Columbia River ports, farmers and growers are forced to pay higher transportation costs. That will affect our farm economy. And the

solution is clear: If you want more vibrant trade, if you want more navigable rivers, if you want busier ports, we need to deepen this channel. We need to make it deeper. And so that's what we're going to do. The engineering work is already underway, and they'll start moving mud next year.

Deepening the channel by three feet might not sound like a big change to some folks, but the people here know what it means. The people who are the experts understand what that extra three feet means for this mighty river. See, cargo ships will be able to load 300 more containers than they can now. If they're shipping grain, they'll be able to carry an extra 6,000 tons. And that's good news for farmers.

By working together to deepen the Columbia River Channel, we're helping to save manufacturers and growers an estimated \$68 million a year on the cost of shipping containerized cargo. That helps a lot when you're competing in a global market, especially if you're an individual rancher, small-business owner, owner of your own farm.

The steps I'm announcing today also fulfill our responsibility to be good stewards of the land and water. The environmental review of this project included active participation by interested parties and the public. Through the collaborative process, they come up with the solution. It included a thorough analysis by environmental agencies, and they ruled the dredging safe for the river's ecosystem.

The Army Corps of Engineer will carry out their work under strict environmental guidelines and monitoring. In fact, this project includes restoration and conservation measures that go beyond the requirements of the law. We're installing new technology in the lower Columbia River to help salmon and steelhead pass through the tide gates. We'll restore and protect wildlife habitats in tidal marshes, swamps, and other wetlands. We're seeking out good uses for the sand dredge from the bottom of the river. All of these efforts will help us meet a great goal, to leave the Columbia River ecosystem in better shape than we found it. I'm confident we can achieve that goal.

The Columbia River Channel Deepening Project is a wise use of taxpayers' money. It fosters an ethic of cooperation between

Washington, DC, and State and local governments. It brings together business leaders and labor representatives, farmers, ranchers, and conservationists and politicians on both sides of the aisle. The project fulfills the Government's charge to create the conditions for economic expansion and job growth by respecting our duties to the environment.

I'm proud that we're able to move forward with this project after years of review. I urge the United States Congress to act quickly on my budget request.

On many other issues from reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire to keeping hydro-power energy rates as low as possible to conserving our precious salmon, my administration is working with Pacific Northwest leaders to meet our shared priorities. I look forward to working with you in the future to sustain the physical and economic vitality of this beautiful part of America.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. at Rivergate Industrial Park. In his remarks, he referred to Steve Corey, commissioner, Port of Portland; Speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives Karen Minnis; and Bob Lohn, Regional Administrator, Northwest Regional Office, National Marine Fisheries Service.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

August 7

In the morning, in Kennebunkport, ME, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush attended the wedding of their nephew George Prescott Bush at St. Ann's Episcopal Church.

August 8

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

August 9

In the morning, in the President's private dining room, the President had breakfast with Vice President Dick Cheney. He then had an intelligence briefing. Later, in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he met with the President's Management Council and received a report on the President's Management Agenda.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Annandale, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President had dinner with Representative Porter J. Goss of Florida and White House Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card, Jr., to discuss the President's nomination of Representative Goss to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The President announced his intention to appoint Robert Oberdoerfer Harris, Donna McLean, and Peter W. Tredick as members of the Presidential Emergency Board No. 238.

The President announced his intention to accord the personal rank of Ambassador to Lisa Guillermin Gable during her performance of duties as Commissioner General of the U.S. Exhibition at the Universal Exposition in Aichi, Japan, March 25–September 25, 2005.

August 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Pensacola, FL.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Niceville, FL. Later, he traveled to Panama City, FL.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

August 11

In the morning, the President took Senator John McCain of Arizona, who traveled with the President from Florida, on a tour of the Bush Ranch.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Albuquerque, NM, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Tom Hesch. Later, he participated in an interview with representatives of regional media.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Phoenix, AZ, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Lucia Haas.

August 12

In the morning, the President had a briefing on Tropical Storm Bonnie and Hurricane Charley. He then had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Las Vegas, NV, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Mike Peschl. Later, he participated in a tour of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America International Training Facility.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Los Angeles, CA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Lynn Brennan. Later, with Mrs. Bush, he traveled to Bel Air, CA.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Santa Monica, CA. Later, they returned to Los Angeles.

During the day, in Los Angeles, the President and Mrs. Bush participated in an interview with Larry King of CNN for later broadcast.

August 13

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and a briefing on Hurricane Charley. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Portland, OR, where, upon arrival in the afternoon, the President met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Chris Dudley. Later, he and Mrs. Bush traveled to Beaverton, OR, where they participated in a discussion at Southridge High School.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Seattle, WA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Jeanne Robertson. He then toured the Boeing Delivery Center.

In the evening, the President traveled to Medina, WA, where he attended a Victory 2004 dinner at a private residence. Later, he traveled to Redmond, WA.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of the Presidential delegation to attend the inauguration of Leonel Fernandez as President

of the Dominican Republic on August 16: Ann M. Veneman (delegation leader); Hans H. Hertell; Anna Cablik; Sergio Pino; and Raul R. Romero.

The President declared a major disaster in Florida and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by Tropical Storm Bonnie and Hurricane Charley beginning on August 11 and continuing.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released August 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on establishment of a second Presidential Emergency Board regarding the dispute between the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and its conductors represented by the United Transportation Union

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2443, H.R. 3340, H.R. 3463, H.R. 4222, H.R. 4226, H.R. 4327, H.R. 4417, H.R. 4427, and S. 2712

Fact sheet: America's Ownership Society: Expanding Opportunities

Fact sheet: Expanding Access and Increasing the Affordability of Health Insurance Through Health Savings Accounts

Released August 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: Job Training for the 21st Century Economy

Released August 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: Supporting America's Small Businesses

Fact sheet: Medicare Drug Discount Cards Help Seniors Save on Prescription Drug Costs

Released August 12

Fact sheet: Skills To Build for America's Future

Released August 13

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Florida

Fact sheet: The Columbia River Channel Deepening Project: Export Opportunities and Estuary Restoration

**Acts Approved
by the President**

Approved August 9

H.R. 2443 / Public Law 108-293
Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2004

H.R. 3340 / Public Law 108-294

To redesignate the facilities of the United States Postal Service located at 7715 and 7748 S. Cottage Grove Avenue in Chicago, Illinois, as the "James E. Worsham Post Office" and the "James E. Worsham Carrier Annex Building", respectively, and for other purposes

H.R. 3463 / Public Law 108-295
SUTA Dumping Prevention Act of 2004

H.R. 4222 / Public Law 108-296

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 550 Nebraska Avenue in Kansas City, Kansas, as the "Newell George Post Office Building"

H.R. 4226 / Public Law 108-297
Cape Town Treaty Implementation Act of 2004

H.R. 4327 / Public Law 108-298

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 7450 Natural Bridge Road in St. Louis, Missouri, as the "Vitalas 'Veto' Reid Post Office Building"

H.R. 4417 / Public Law 108-299

To modify certain deadlines pertaining to machine-readable, tamper-resistant entry and exit documents

H.R. 4427 / Public Law 108-300

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service at 73 South Euclid Avenue in Montauk, New York, as the "Perry B. Duryea, Jr. Post Office"

S. 2712 / Public Law 108-301

To preserve the ability of the Federal Housing Administration to insure mortgages under sections 238 and 519 of the National Housing Act